

# Al-Ahram

Weekly



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by George  
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No.283

Published in Cairo by AL-AHRAH established in 1875

8 - 14 August 1996

16 Pages

P.T.75

## Security alert

THE US Embassy in Kuwait tightened security yesterday after receiving threats of a bomb attack against an American government installation in Kuwait. An embassy spokesman told Reuters the threat was relayed by a local newspaper which received an anonymous telephone call on Tuesday.

US government and military installations throughout the Gulf intensified security following the death of 19 US airmen in last month's attack on the military base in Khobar, Saudi Arabia. Meanwhile, the Pentagon announced that the first group of 1,200 engineers, military police and air traffic controllers had arrived in Saudi Arabia to help build a remote desert base for the 4,000 US troops based in the kingdom.

## Ambitions

IRAN is building up its naval strength and firepower around the mouth of the Persian Gulf in an effort to acquire the capability to shut off one-fifth of the world's oil supply, claims the September issue of *Jane's Intelligence Review*. The building of a new civilian airport on the island of Abu Musa and the acquisition of fast attack crafts, missiles and a new submarine were all cited in the report as proof of Iranian ambitions.

## Cabinet row

ISRAELI Foreign Minister David Levy failed to attend a special cabinet session called by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday, indicating an escalation in the dispute between the two long-time political rivals. According to AFP, Levy, still basking over his exclusion from key foreign policy decisions, was planning to hand in his resignation as early as Friday's weekly cabinet meeting if the dispute was not resolved.

## Office relieve

A PALESTINIAN deputy named by Israel's Internal Security Ministry from running an office from his home in east Jerusalem received permission to keep it open provided the office was not linked to the Palestinian Authority. Hatem Abdel-Qader, elected in January to the 28-member Palestinian Legislative Council, denied any link to the PA, saying he used the office to meet with his constituents.

Abdel-Qader told AFP that following a meeting with officials from the Israeli Internal Security Ministry, set up by Egyptian Ambassador to Israel Mohamed Bassiouni, it was agreed on Tuesday that the office should stay open. The ministry had, in any case, already encountered legal problems in preventing the deputy from meeting people in his own home and enforcing the Monday deadline they had set for the closure of the office.

## Crowd attacked

GUNMEN opened fire yesterday on a crowd in the southern village of Safat near Abu Qurgas in the Mallawi region of Minya province, killing two policemen and a 32-year-old farmer before fleeing the scene. Security officials also found the dead body of a 20-year-old student in the village of Bani Oufid in the same province. Police said that investigations were underway to determine the motives behind the attacks.

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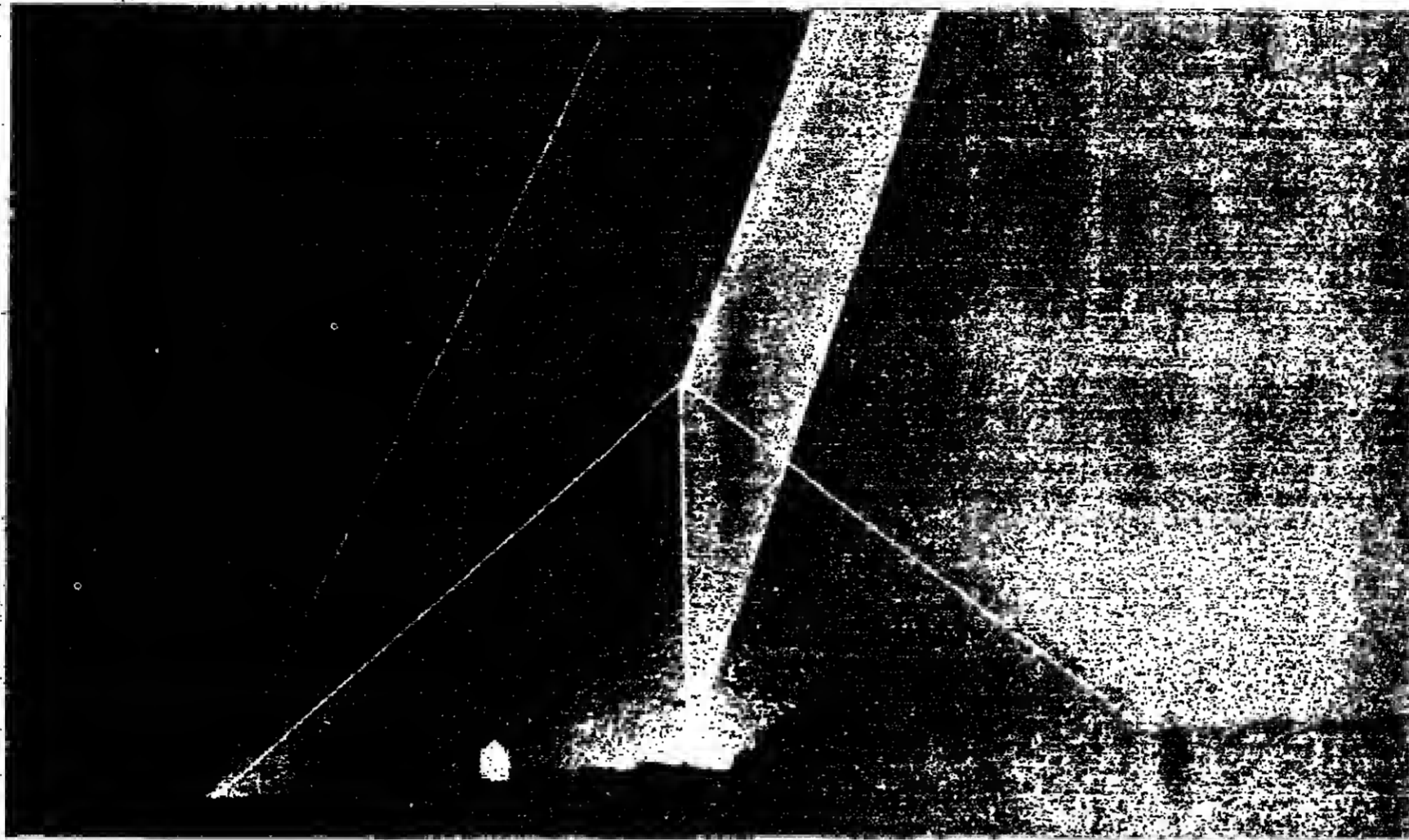
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## Illuminating history

The Pyramids of Giza, never far from the limelight, are once again in the spotlight, this time over controversial changes made to the sound and light show, writes Rena Alim. Original concern focused on the possible harm caused by projecting lasers onto the only extant wonder of the ancient world. Such concerns, however, were quickly pooh-poohed by experts. The concentrated light beams could not, they insisted, harm the ancient rocks.

Scientists and UNESCO experts were approached, and it was only when they discounted the possibility of any harmful effects that the decision was made to go ahead with the laser show, said Sayed Hassaballah, chairman of the Sound and Light Company.

But concerns over possible structural damage to the monuments of the Giza Plateau represented only one strand of the objections made by opponents to the changes.

"Whether they affect the monuments or not is beside the point," insisted Abdel-Halim Nouredin, secretary-general of the Supreme Council for Antiquities. More important, he said, was the fact that the show was not in keeping with the spirit of the place. "Watching the show, one forgets completely that the Pyramids are in fact tombs and that the place was once holy."

History professor Ne'mat Fouad was even more vehement in her objections. The laser show, she said, was a "farce", completely out of sympathy with the site.

Wonders of the ancient world, it seems, are not to be beguiled by advances in technology.

photo: Sherif Sonbol

# Inseparable tracks

**At a joint press conference, presidents Mubarak and Assad agree that progress along the Syrian and Lebanese tracks must be simultaneous.**  
Nevine Khalil reports



photo: Reuters

Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad rejected yesterday an Israeli proposal for the revival of stalled peace talks on the Syrian-Lebanese track, saying that the proposal did not contain the slightest opening for movement towards peace.

Assad dismissed Israel's reported "Lebanon first" formula for movement on the Syrian-Lebanese track out of hand, insisting that progress on the Syrian and Lebanese fronts should go hand in hand.

Speaking at a press conference held jointly with President Mubarak after more than two hours of talks and a working lunch at the presidential palace in Alexandria, Assad told reporters: "I say Lebanon and Syria first, not Lebanon first." He emphasised that Syria remains committed to peace negotiations but only on the basis of United Nations resolutions, international legitimacy and the land for peace formula enshrined by the Madrid conference five years ago.

Mubarak reiterated his view on the relationship between peace and security, saying only peace could lead to security and not vice versa, as some Israeli leaders believe.

There had been "some progress" in peace talks with Israel until the Likud government of Benjamin Netanyahu took office last June, said the Syrian president. Then "a few days ago, Netanyahu said he had sent an invitation [to Syria] through the US for the resumption of talks. But he did not mention in it any formula that would open even a small door of hope for the possibilities of peace."

While declining to reveal details of the Israeli proposal, Assad added: "No one who read it felt it opened the way

to peace or that its author was anxious to achieve peace."

Syria remains committed to peace, he emphasised, "but only on the basis of UN resolutions, land for peace and the other obligations agreed on during the last five years [since Madrid]."

Mubarak agreed with Assad that the Syrian and Lebanese tracks of the peace process should not be separated. "I have already said that negotiations should begin quickly, on both the Syrian and Lebanese tracks at the same time," Mubarak said. Referring to his recent talks with US President Bill Clinton in Washington on this issue,

Mubarak said, "There was [US] agreement to this but I do not expect fast movement on it."

Mubarak said the US administration remains committed to moving the peace process forward but American preoccupation with the upcoming presidential elections is bound to cause delays.

"In the talks with US leaders, we both concluded that movement on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks should be equal," the Egyptian president said.

In reply to a question about Netanyahu's hardline stance, Mubarak urged the Arabs to "give this man some

time" while reassuring the questioner that the American position had not changed.

Asked about Netanyahu's declared insistence on making Israeli security his top priority in peace talks, President Mubarak recalled his recent meeting with Netanyahu in Cairo. "It is peace that will lead to security," Mubarak had told the Israeli prime minister, "and without peace security will be difficult to achieve."

Assad told reporters he fully agreed with Mubarak's suggestion, made during his US visit, for an international conference to combat terrorism and for devising ways to punish terrorists without penalising entire nations or peoples in the process.

"I am very much in agreement with this," Assad said. "Terrorism is a crime and only the criminal should be punished."

The Mubarak-Assad summit followed a flurry of diplomatic activity in the Middle East since the Egyptian leader's return from the US. Assad met Jordan's King Hussein in Damascus on Saturday and the monarch received Netanyahu in Amman two days later. On Tuesday, Mubarak telephoned both Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. Yesterday Hussein and Arafat conferred for three hours at Aqaba, Jordan.

The summit was attended by Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri, Foreign Minister Amr Moussa and Defence Minister Hussein Tantawi. Assad was accompanied by his vice-president, Abdel-Halim Khaddam, and Foreign Minister Farouk Al-Shara.

## New settlements, old story

The cabinet decision to end the freeze on settlements makes overt a policy that the Israelis have been pursuing for some time, writes Graham Usher from Jerusalem

The Israeli cabinet decision on 2 August to end the four-year-old "freeze" on settlement construction in the West Bank and Gaza elicited predictable outrage from the Palestinians. PLO leader Yasser Arafat denounced the move as a violation of the Oslo Accords, while Palestinian National Authority (PNA) minister Saeb Erekat said it amounted to "a *de facto* cancellation of peace."

Both characterisations are accurate, yet the problem facing Arafat and the PNA is that their criticisms would have carried more weight had the previous Israeli government adhered to the "freeze".

Many Palestinian and Israeli commentators, however, see the Likud government's decision as fatal to the Oslo peace process, less because it marks a rupture with the settlement policies of Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres than because it represents an acceleration of them. As in other policy areas, Likud makes overt practices which Labour preferred to keep covert.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu justified the end to the freeze as removing "discrimination against Jewish settlement in Judea, Samaria (i.e. the West Bank) and the Gaza Strip". The decision means that around 1,500 "frozen" settlements in the West Bank and Gaza will become available for sale, but does not "signal a massive influx of new settlers", says government spokesman Moshe Fogel.

Likud is likely to proceed cautiously with any expansion, not only to avert international criticism but also to keep its ruling coalition together. Any move to expand existing settlements will require the approval of Netanyahu and Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai. Similarly, any decision to create new settlements will require unanimous cabinet approval, unlikely to be forthcoming. Israel's Internal Security Minister, Avigdor Kahalani, has already indicated that he opposes not only the establishment of new settlements but also any expansion beyond Israel's existing "settlement zones" in the West Bank and Gaza.

These zones, along the Jordan Valley, the north of the West Bank, the old Green Line and, critically, Greater Jerusalem, comprise, together with Israel's self-

declared "state lands", around 70 per cent of all West Bank territory. It was precisely these zones that were targeted for settlement expansion during the Labour government's so-called "freeze".

Government statistics show that between 1992, when the Rabin government was elected, and 1996, the settler population in the West Bank and Gaza swelled by 45 per cent, from around 100,000 in 1992 to its current 145,000, concentrated in the above zones. Labour also expedited the construction of 29 settler by-pass roads to link up the 133 Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, ostensibly to ensure security for the settlers, but actually, says Palestinian geographer Khalil Tafakji, to prevent any territorial continuity being established between different Palestinian autonomous areas. It is the buffers along these roads — which, added together, are already 212km in length — that many Palestinians fear Netanyahu will use to expand the existing settlements.

It is against this background that Israel's decision to "unfreeze" settlement construction must be viewed. For the Palestinian human rights group, Al-Haq, the new policy is ominous not because it marks a new departure, but because it "facilitates an already ongoing policy of changing the status quo in the Occupied Territories through land confiscation and the building and expansion of existing settlements". Given the record of Labour, Al-Haq anticipates that the "adoption of an official decision by the Israeli cabinet to lift the freeze on settlements will result in a construction boom and massive expansion of settlers in the West Bank and Gaza, consistent with plans of settler groups to increase the number of settlers to 300,000 over the next three years."

The critical difference between Labour and Likud is this less overt strategy than over numbers and presentation. For the

Rabin-Peres regime, the "thickening" of existing settlements and building by-pass roads was couched in terms of "natural growth" and the provision of security for settlers in the West Bank and Gaza. For Likud the aim is simply to delineate the eventual borders between Israel and the PA in advance of any final settlement. "Settlement is one of the things that will determine the map of the state," says Israel's Finance Minister Dan Meridor. "If we stop settling a certain area, it means we are giving up this area."

On 6 August, Yasser Arafat called on Palestinians to develop a "plan" to stop Israel's expanding settlements. One day before, 30 Knesset members belonging to the Labour and Meretz parties requested that the Knesset reconvene during its summer recess to debate government policy on settlements. Both calls have so far met with apathy from both the Palestinian and Israeli publics. For Palestinians, the reason is clear: it was the Labour government that created the conditions for Likud's renewed settlement drive and it was the PA — in agreeing to Israel's construction of by-pass roads in the name of security — that granted it legitimacy.

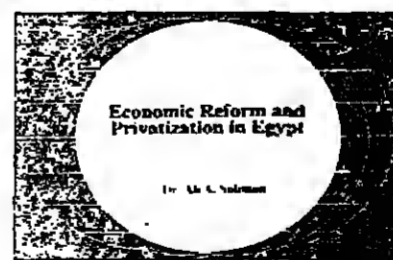
In this sense, Meridor's comments are cruel but accurate. In an interview in the Israeli daily *Haaretz* on 19 July, he said, tongue-in-cheek, that as far as he and Likud were concerned praise is due to all sides.

He said: "Rabin and Peres deserve to be praised for increasing the number of Jews in Judea and Samaria (sic) by 40 per cent. The Israeli left deserves to be praised for not saying a word against this in the last four years. The US government deserves to be praised, for it knew [about the settler expansion] but did not interfere. And the PA deserves to be praised because it saw that we were building and knew we were building but continued the peace process."

## Court of Cassation ruling on Abu Zeid divorce shocks intellectuals and human rights activists

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Annual subscription price (mailing cost included) - Egypt: Individuals L.E.40; Arab countries: Individuals \$25 Organizations L.E. 50; All other countries: \$50

Payment in cash or by cheque payable to: Al-Ahram Subscription Department, Al-Ahram Galaa St. Cairo

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# Egypt-IMF agreement imminent

The draft letter of intent comprising a comprehensive programme for the second phase of the economic reform, presented by Egypt after lengthy consultations with International Monetary Fund (IMF) staff, is currently moving upwards within the IMF hierarchy, Minister of State for Economic Affairs Youssef Boutros-Ghali told *Al-Ahram Weekly* in an exclusive interview.

The proposal has so far gained the approval of the staff of the IMF's Middle Eastern department. The draft, which outlines the government's plans and policies, will be considered by the IMF's executive board next month, Boutros-Ghali said.

According to Egypt's agreement with the Paris Club of creditor nations, the endorsement of the IMF's executive board is necessary for Egypt to obtain about \$5.5 billion in debt reduction, the final tranche of a 50 per cent debt write-off which started in 1991. A favourable executive board decision will enable Egypt to apply for the write-off immediately.

Egypt and the IMF are close to clinching a deal on the second phase of the economic reform programme. Minister of State for Economic Affairs Youssef Boutros-Ghali spoke with Ghada Ragab on the status of the agreement



Boutros-Ghali said that the draft expresses the government's intention to keep the budgetary stance as it is, with "no additional charges, no additional taxes, no additional burdens. The budget is very adequate for what we want to do and there is no need to tinker with it."

He said the privatisation programme outlined in the draft is the same one announced by Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri's cabinet last February. It was found by IMF staff to be "perfectly sensible," he added.

The draft includes a set of measures for the gradual liberalisation of trade, which will result in cheaper imports.

"These measures should make a lot of imported goods somewhat cheaper for the Egyptian consumer, and this should increase, in a very moderate way, competition to domestic industry so that there is an incentive to improve efficiency, reduce costs and improve the quality of products as a prelude to Egypt's insertion into the global economy," Boutros-Ghali said.

Institutional reform, which includes new legislation such as the anti-trust law, the unified investment law, as well as streamlining the bureaucracy, is also high on the government's agenda.

Boutros-Ghali said the policies outlined in the draft form a comprehensive plan aimed at achieving higher growth rates and improving the quality of life for low-income brackets. While consumers footed the bill for the first phase of the reform, which aimed at achieving financial stability, producers, who benefited from the first phase will now be called upon to contribute, he said.

Boutros-Ghali expressed the government's optimism that the programme will succeed in achieving its targets and will meet with wide international support.

"We are confident that we have presented a convincing, coherent, comprehensive and well-thought-through argument for our policies, presented in the language of modern economic thought," he said.

## Defending freedom of association

**Awad El-Morr, chief justice of the Supreme Constitutional Court, examines the Court's rulings delimiting the right to form and join trade unions and syndicates**



The right of a citizen in freely associate with others includes his right to form and join trade unions and professional syndicates which shall be subject to no limitation other than their internal rules, and those prescribed by law if necessary in a democratic society, restrictions that could be based on the interests of national security or public order or the preservation of others rights and freedoms.

Hence, public authorities should refrain from interference that would impede or curb or narrow down the lawful exercise of the right of its members to freely elect their own representatives, to draw up independently their constituent instrument and internal regulations, and to recognise the autonomous administration of their business.

Case No. 47, in the third judicial year 1981, raised an acrimonious dispute relating to Law No. 125 of the year 1981 which terminated — as from the date on which it came into force — the mandate of the elected council of the Bar Association, and delegated to the minister of justice the formation of a temporary appointed council as a substitute for the legitimate one.

In furtherance of the objectives of that law, that minister appointed the new council assigned with the duty to lay down grounds for a new statutory reorganisation of the Bar.

The petitioners — in their capacity as elected members of the dissolved Bar — challenged the validity of that law before the Judicial Administrative Court, arguing that terminating their mandate before the expiry of its duration violated Article 56 of the Constitution which mandates the creation of syndicates on a democratic basis. Added to this, they claimed, was the fact that the nominated council formed by the minister of justice relied on the same law, and that consequently both were null and void.

Upon a prima facie finding by the Court of Merits of the plausibility of the constitutional challenge addressed against that law, the issue was brought to the Supreme Constitutional Court for consideration.

Faced with the standing requirement claimed by the government to be lacking, the Court noted that the outcome of the validity or otherwise of the questioned law has bearing on the claim before the Court of Merits which consists of the annulment of the ministerial decision founded on that law together with due compensation for the repairment of damages resulting therefrom.

That the abrogation of that law and that decision, shall in no way affect the personal interest which the petitioners have in the outcome of the constitutional issue, is not open to question, since the decision and that law were enforceable during their efficacy period. In view of the foregoing, the petitioners who in fact were prejudiced by the operation of the challenged law at the time of its enforcement, have remarkably established standing.

With respect to the subject-matter of the constitutional controversy, and in advancement of the right to establish syndicates and federations on a democratic basis, the supreme constitutional court invalidated the challenged law.

Under Article 56 of the Constitution the democratic foundation of syndicates and federations is a right to be guaranteed by law which shall also regulate their participation in carrying out social programmes, raising the standard of efficiency and consolidating the socialist behaviour among their members.

This article has not only recognized the right to form syndicates and federations, but also affirmed the principle of democratic syndicalism which is the natural consequence of the democratic regime.

This principle is also the corner stone of other constitutional guarantees that ensure the people's supremacy, their participation in the exercise of power, and their enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms including the freedom of expression, the right to choose freely and by themselves their own leaders and representatives in the administration of the affairs of the government, and the preservation of public interests through elections effected either on the national or the local levels.

The challenged law — in defiance of these norms — denied the members of the Bar the right to voluntarily choose their leaders, acting as their legal representatives in conducting the functions of the Bar, and therefore violated Article 56 of the Constitution.

## Census stresses development

This decade's national census is under way. As Dina Ezzat reports, its results will place the accent on the need for more comprehensive development

This week the Central Agency for the Mobilisation of the Public and Statistics (CAMPAS) has just finished the first phase of the national census that it conducts once every decade. "This is the 12th national census to be conducted in Egypt, and we believe that its results will emphasise the need to expand further the ongoing projects of combating illiteracy and expanding family planning services," said Mustafa Gaafar, deputy chairman of CAMPAS.

The first phase covered the streets and roads of the entire nation. "From the end of May, we had 1,000 men walking down every street and every block in every city and every remote village," said Gaafar.

This effort culminated in the accurate recording and compilation of all the roads and streets — "even those with no names and no numbers" — in every governorate in the country. For the first time, Halsey and Shalatin, on Egypt's southern border, are included in the national census.

Big, bold numbers painted in green at the beginning and end of every road mark the efforts of the census's working group. These numbers are coded in accordance with the urban divisions of each governorate.

The second phase, which is due to commence in a few days, will make a record

of all buildings, irrespective of their form or function — anything from apartment and office buildings to refugee compounds, unplanned housing blocks and even fenced-off family cemeteries. "It basically covers any and every place where people can either live or work," Gaafar explained.

The third phase will focus on places of work. It will accurately register every public and private work establishment, irrespective of its size and nature. It will also take stock of the number of workers in each establishment and some basic identity information on them. "This is the first time that the census will cover the type of information that we will get from phase three," said Gaafar.

The purpose behind this new addition to the census is to provide a database for future economic censuses. "From this phase we will, for example, be able to assess the volume of expansion of the public sector. We will be able to know if private investments are conducted on a large or small scale, and thus we can have a comprehensive overall picture of economic development trends," Gaafar added.

Some 25,000 men and women will be working on this phase. "Of course we [CAMPAS] do not have this kind of

staff," said Gaafar. "We will have to rely on employees of the municipal offices, the ministries of Manpower and Social Affairs, and members of the social service system."

The number working on the project will quadruple when the census gets into its fourth, final and most interesting phase.

The fourth phase starts on 17 November, when about 100,000 men and women will begin knocking on every door — "even of the families who live in the cemetery zones" — to obtain detailed information about the number of members in each family and their educational and marital status.

"Those field researchers who approach the public for this kind of information get extensive training on how to deal with people," said Gaafar. "The fact of the matter is that this is the most difficult and sensitive part of the census, and if you do not have researchers who command respect and trust you are more likely to get wrong information."

The sensitivity of this phase stems from the fact that, in a way, it impinges on people's privacy and prides into their concerns. For example, some parents might not want to let a researcher the exact number of children they have because they are afraid of the evil eye, while others

might give a bigger number in the hope that this will entitle them to more subsidised goods.

Another problem is that some families tend to give misleading information about the male members of their families. "Again this has to do with the popular fear of the evil eye, but it also has to do with the fact that some families like to have their sons evading military service," said Gaafar.

In the end, the number that the researchers come up with will be "the closest to the actual size of the population, but not necessarily exactly right," he admitted.

The last national census showed that the number of Egyptian men and women living permanently in Egypt was over 48 million. "We estimated that there were about two million or so living overseas, but this was not an accurate estimate," said Gaafar.

The main problem is that there are entire families who have been living overseas for years and have no relatives who can be reached for accurate information. In this case the authority relies on documents in the Civil Registry records.

Basing his estimate on the annual records of births and deaths, Gaafar predicts that the present number of people

"living in Egypt" will turn out to be around 60 million. "We are not sure about the figure for Egyptians living abroad, but we also predict an increase," he added.

These increases do not, however, necessarily mean that the annual population growth rate has risen, Gaafar asserted. "Actually, we predict it will record a decrease from 2.75 per thousand, as recorded by the last census, to 2.12 per thousand," he said.

Other predictions include a decrease in the rate of stable long-term paying jobs, a small drop in the rate of illiteracy and the continued phenomenon of there being more men — around 52 per cent of the population — than women in the nation.

"We will make information available for all concerned bodies to rely on for their future projects in the fields of family planning, literacy programmes, job creation, providing better housing and expanding urban areas," said Gaafar. The final results of the census will be made public in 1998.

Egypt conducted its first census in 1897. At the time, the entire Egyptian population numbered not much more than 2.5 million. Today, Egypt's 60 million men and women are still living on 5.5 per cent of the total national territory.

## Bank robbery

FOUR armed men robbed the Ayyat branch of Bank Misr on Monday morning, a senior security source at the Interior Ministry said. The men, one of whom was dressed in a uniform similar to that of a police officer, drove up to the bank in a green Peugeot and managed to steal LE 200,000. The bank guard was killed and three others were injured when the attackers opened fire randomly. The incident took place at about 1pm on Monday.

Officials from the Giza Security Department and experts from the Criminal Laboratory inspected the scene of the crime, while security forces closed off all routes to the surrounding area. The prosecution opened an investigation.

Meanwhile, the State Security Investigation Department has arrested two of the most active members of the military wing of Al-Gama'a al-Islamiya in Beni Suef and Assiut. Ahmed Mahmoud El-Khouli, 31, is charged with committing several acts against Christians and police establishments and Hani Bekheit Mansour is considered one of the most dangerous terrorists in Egypt.

## Parliament contested

Believing that the last People's Assembly elections were a sham, irate opposition party MPs want to dissolve the parliament. But, asks Omayma Abdel-Latif, do they have a constitutional leg on which to stand

Opposition parties, which together won 15 out of 444 seats of the People's Assembly, have vowed to work together by constitutional and legal methods to bring about the downfall of the People's Assembly which they claim was formed by falsifying the will of the voters.

At a press conference earlier this week, a group of opposition figures issued a statement appealing to President Mubarak to "intervene to disband the Assembly and call new elections".

The move comes one week after a ruling by the Supreme Administrative Court rejecting the Ministry of Interior's request to halt the implementation of a previous Administrative Court order declaring the results of the first-round elections in 109 constituencies to be null and void.

"The Interior Ministry, the authority responsible for implementing the will of the court, has intentionally rejected the mandatory execution of these orders," stated the court ruling.

The court went as far as to describe the Interior Ministry's move as "a flagrant legal violation which would adversely affect the system of the state".

On 6 December 1995 the Administrative Court ruled the first round election results in 50 constituencies to be fraudulent. Despite the ruling, government officials pressed ahead with the second round elections after filing appeals with the Supreme Administrative Court. The move prompted a flood of legal actions by candidates who sought to have the elections in their constituencies annulled due to alleged fraud. The court later ruled the election results of a further 59 constituencies invalid.

Last week, the court turned down the Ministry of Interior's appeals prompting many opposition figures to call for the disbandment of the Assembly and new elections.

"The ruling reflects a condemnation of the electoral procedures," said MP Sameh Ashour of the Nasserist Party. At the press conference Ashour added that the opposition parties would launch a "joint political campaign targeted at dissolving the parliament or at least a re-election in the disputed constituencies".

Ahmed Hamadi, the deputy speaker of parliament, speaking to the *Weekly*, questioned the validity of the court ruling. He described the opposition campaign to dissolve the parliament on the basis of the court ruling as "unconstitutional".

"The Assembly alone has the authority to rule on the validity of a deputy's membership. According to the Constitution, once the results were declared it becomes the Assembly's right to look into them. In this case, litigants should file their complaints to parliament which will forward them to the Court of Cassation for investigation," Hamadi said.

The Constitution, he added, makes it the responsibility of the Court of Cassation to ascertain the legality of a deputy's membership of parliament only at the request of the Assembly.

The decision to annul an election is the prerogative of the Assembly alone.

Another opposition figure, Ibrahim Abaza, secretary-general of Al-Wafd Party, has laid the blame on the government for failing to respond to the court rulings thus creating what he described as "a serious crisis between the state's authorities and the legal system".

"Had the government been committed to the first court rulings annulling the results of the first round elections, there would not have been such a crisis between the state's different authorities," said Abaza. He disclosed that the opposition parties are studying a proposal to submit a memorandum to the president to urge him to intervene and call for a new election.

But Ayman Nur, who was among the few opposition figures that won a seat in the election, questioned the opposition's ability to have the Assembly dissolved. "The only way to do it is to prove that it is illegal and this will be a difficult task," he told the *Weekly*.

Kamal Khaled, a prominent lawyer and former MP, does not believe the court orders will be taken seriously. "Even if new elections went ahead in the disputed constituencies, it would not be under the full supervision of the judiciary, an obvious violation of the constitution," he said.

Khaled, who played a key role in disbanding two previous parliaments, plans to revive a legal battle which he first launched in 1990. He will seek a ruling from the Supreme Constitutional Court against the parliamentary election law, which Khaled believes violates the Constitution.

With respect to the subject-matter of the constitutional controversy, and in advancement of the right to establish syndicates and federations on a democratic basis, the supreme constitutional court invalidated the challenged law.

Under Article 56 of the Constitution the democratic foundation of syndicates and federations is a right to be guaranteed by law which shall also regulate their participation in carrying out social programmes, raising the standard of efficiency and consolidating the socialist behaviour among their members.

This article has not only recognized the right to form syndicates and federations, but also affirmed the principle of democratic syndicalism which is the natural consequence of the democratic regime.

This principle is also the corner stone of other constitutional guarantees that ensure the people's supremacy, their participation in the exercise of power, and their enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms including the freedom of expression, the right to choose freely and by themselves their own leaders and representatives in the administration of the affairs of the government, and the preservation of public interests through elections effected either on the national or the local levels.

The challenged law — in defiance of these norms — denied the members of the Bar the right to voluntarily choose their leaders, acting as their legal representatives in conducting the functions of the Bar, and therefore violated Article 56 of the Constitution.

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photo: Makram Gad El-Karim

## Ramses in Giza

An archaeological expedition commissioned by the Supreme Council of Antiquities has discovered a joint pair of unique statues of Ramses II to the south of the Pyramid of Mycerinus under the Giza Plateau. The two statues portray Ramses II in two different guises: as king of Egypt and as the god Hor Akhti. The statues, which are made of pink granite, are 3.5 metres long and together weigh nearly four tons.

This is the first time that objects belonging to Ramses II's New Kingdom pharaoh, have been found near the Giza Pyramids, a burial ground for Old Kingdom pharaohs. The statues are unfinished — the right foot of one is uncarved — and they lack the customary hieroglyphic engravings, leading archaeologists to suggest that Ramses II may have died while work was still in progress.

Minister of Culture Farouq Hosni will hold a press conference shortly to give details of the new discovery.

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## Wafd expels dissident

The Wafd Party has dismissed one of its senior members who decided to form a new conservative Wafdist party, reports Mona El-Nahhas

Last week, the Wafd Party stripped Adli El-Mowaled of his membership. Party leaders said that El-Mowaled, who joined the pre-revolution Wafd Party in 1934, had diverged from the party's official line. But the senior politician insisted that he had done nothing more than criticise some internal activities of the party. El-Mowaled claimed that the party's last elections were rigged and that its highest body was formed according to personal preferences rather than on objective grounds.

ageddin, deputy chairman of the party, has described the move as sheer lies. "At any rate, this number is nothing compared with the total number of party members, which exceeds 500,000," he said.

According to Yassin Serageddin, El-Mowaled was expelled from the Wafd because he did not abide by the party's line. "In *Sawt Al-Umma* newspaper, he kept on insulting the party leader and senior members, claiming that the party was about to collapse because of what he published. El-Mowaled was investigated by the party's disciplinary committee, the body which decided to dismiss him from membership. During investigations, according to Yassin Serageddin, El-Mowaled was very confused and did not know how to defend himself.

lapse," Serageddin said. El-Mowaled is the board chairman of *Sawt Al-Umma*, a newspaper which he rents on a monthly basis from the Liberal Party. El-Mowaled controls the editorial policy of the newspaper and intends the publication to be the mouthpiece of his political party. The final form of the party's platform, however, has not yet been decided upon.

Yassin Serageddin said that El-Mowaled had expected to win a leading position in the Wafd Party's highest body. "Failing to do so, El-Mowaled began to turn against the Wafd," he said, insisting that the last party elections were completely fair.

Immediately following the elections, conducted nearly two months ago, El-Mowaled announced that he would leave the party and found a new one that would revive old conservative Wafdist principles. The breakaway party is still in the process of being formed. El-Mowaled accused the current Wafd Party of becoming a family business, where favouritism and monopoly of power prevailed. "It was [Wafd Party head Fadi] Serageddin's relatives who took posts in the party's highest body," he said.

El-Mowaled claims that around 500 members of the Wafd have declared their full support for him and decided to join his new party. Yassin Serageddin



Photo: Emad Abdel-Hamid

## 'It's not over yet'

Professor Abu Zeid's defence team will sue the Court of Cassation, which this week upheld the ruling separating him from his wife on the grounds of apostasy. Amira Howaidy reports

The Court of Cassation's decision this week to uphold a ruling ordering the separation of Cairo University professor Nasr Hamed Abu Zeid from his wife has sent shock waves through secular circles and civil rights groups. The unprecedented ruling was first issued by the Cairo Court of Appeal in June last year on the grounds that Abu Zeid is an apostate.

This week's ruling, pronounced by the highest criminal court in Egypt, cannot be appealed and the couple's last remaining hope of resuming a normal life in Egypt lies in an overruling of the judgement by presidential decree.

Abu Zeid, who took leave of his Cairo University post after receiving a three-year grant to become a visiting professor at Leiden University in the Netherlands, yesterday told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that he will not leave his wife, that he loves her and has no intention of accepting the verdict.

Only hours after the ruling was heard, the writers' organisation PEN International, the Egyptian Organisation for

Human Rights (EOHR) and the Centre for Human Rights Legal Aid (CHRLA) issued angry statements criticising the ruling and calling for the intervention of President Hosni Mubarak. They consider the verdict to be tantamount to a death sentence against Abu Zeid, since he may now become a target for armed Islamist groups.

A recent amendment to Article Three of the Commercial and Civil Pleading Law, which states that only those with a direct interest are allowed to file court cases, had been expected to put an end to the saga, but the court surprised observers when it did not take this amendment into consideration.

Abu Zeid's defence lawyers said that although the ruling "shocked" them, they were not going to give up. "It's not over yet. We shall sue the Court of Cassation on the grounds that it committed grave professional errors in its ruling," Mona Zulficar of the defence team told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. "We are confident that the Court of Cassation is capable of correcting an error committed by one of its tribunals, and the law permits this."

The Court of Cassation has several benches. The Abu Zeid ruling was handed down by the personal-status bench. Asked if she had already read the memorandum explaining the court's decision — which has not yet been made public — Zulficar said that she had just received it and in a "quick" reading had spotted a number of legal errors.

Tarek El-Bishri, vice-president of the Administrative Court, said that the law only permits the sort of legal action which the defence team is planning if there is a grave error in the verdict. "It has to be made clear," he told the *Weekly*, "that the Court of Cassation, strictly, a court that looks into the legality of a case, it does not evaluate its content or the issue itself." He added that since the Court of Appeal supported the separation verdict, all the Court of Cassation could do was to review the legality of this support. "From the legal point of view, the court did not commit any mistakes. I do not understand why there is such a big fuss about it," he said.

Asked why he thought the court did not respond to the amendment in the Commercial and Civil Pleading Law, El-Bishri pointed out that when the amendment was passed in the People's Assembly, the court had already set the date for the final ruling, "which means it had already taken a decision on the case and the amendment was passed too late".

Commenting on the call for the intervention of the president, El-Bishri said, "There is no such thing as cancelling a verdict."

Whatever tactics Abu Zeid's defence team employs, legal experts say that the academic has three "difficult" options: to accept the verdict; or to divorce his wife and repeat before a court and then remarry her; or to pursue a long legal battle with very little chance of winning.

Ahmed El-Khawaga, president of the Bar Association and a member of the defence team, agreed that Abu Zeid's only realistic way out was to declare his faith before a court. "He has always refused this, maintaining that he has never renounced his faith. But there are no alternatives," he said.

To many, the Abu Zeid case, which has dragged on in the courts for the past three years, is symbolic of the Islamist-secular divide in the country. It began when Abu Zeid applied for promotion at Cairo University. He submitted two of his research works to an examining committee, which accused him of rejecting fundamental tenets of Islam and denied him promotion.

Abu Zeid filed a lawsuit claiming his right to promotion with the Administrative Court in March 1993, but lost. In response, a group of Islamist lawyers filed a lawsuit a few months later demanding the break-up of Abu Zeid's marriage. Their argument was that an apostate should not be allowed to marry a Muslim woman. A Giza court dismissed the case on 27 January 1995 on the grounds that those who initiated it "had no legal interest". But the Cairo Appeal Court reversed the decision on 14 June 1995 and ordered Abu Zeid's separation from his wife.

Two occasions stand out in particular. The first, referred to by the newspaper as the "affair of the prostitutes", occurred at the beginning of 1894. Citizens of Alexandria, the newspaper reports, "complained that the lodgings of prostitutes in the same buildings in which respectable citizens have their homes is detrimental to public morals. If it is not possible to segregate the prostitutes in a separate quarter, then at least we ask officials in the government and the foreign consuls to turn their attention to purging the main streets and public buildings of their presence." Several days later, the newspaper expressed its regrets that the foreign consuls "refused to consent to submitting foreign prostitutes to medical inspection and to grant the governor of Alexandria any authority over these women".

The second incident occurred in the summer of the same year. A Greek expatriate, called Corbetti, had rented land in the area of Ashmun. Because the government was owed back revenues on the land, the Ashmun district put the proceeds of the land under administrative restraint. Included in this restraint were 200 bushels of *foul* (beans), which the tenant smuggled to the warehouse of another Greek expatriate, Corbetti, living outside of the administrative boundaries of Ashmun. When the district police commissioner attempted to confiscate the *foul* from Corbetti, Corbetti obstructed him and a fight broke out between them. Then the deputy consul for the provinces of Menoufia and Gharbiya issued an ultimatum to the commissioner to lift the restraint on the *foul*, "or else he would come to the area and lift it himself". It took the personal intervention of the minister of interior, through lengthy negotiations with the Greek consul-general in Cairo, to resolve the issue of 200 bushels of confiscated *foul*.

Such incidents showed the extent to which these foreign officials could abuse the political and jurisdictional sovereignty of Egypt. It would be another 50 years before Egypt rid itself of the capitulations system that occasioned such abuses.

The consuls' other responsibilities included protecting the citizens of their countries within the scope of the jurisdictions granted by the capitulations system. The liberty with which the consuls-general exercised these powers to help foreign nationals to escape the hand of the law in Egypt was a source of bitter protest by the local authorities and echoed by *Al-Ahram*.

The consuls-general were equally successful in promoting the affairs of their respective countries through the municipal councils in cities where their expatriate communities were relatively numerous and influential. When the first municipal council of Alexandria was founded, for example, the majority of its members were European. At the same time, the composition of the municipal council was also an arena for international political rivalries.

Such rivalries stirred the hopes of *Al-Ahram* that some foreign consuls might support Egyptian interests. One notes the newspaper's attempt to exploit European rivalries when it welcomed the arrival of the new German consul-general in February 1894. "The public hopes that his excellency the new German consul, while not ignoring, firstly, the importance of Germany's commercial interests in Egypt, secondly, that Egypt is Germany's key to the Middle East, and thirdly, that Egypt is the gateway to Germany's African colonies, will adopt a strategy that will help the Egyptians achieve their aspirations. For the fact that Egypt is in the grip of the British constitutes an impediment to the fulfillment of Germany's political and commercial interests."

Diplomatic life also brought with it the attendant perquisites of glittering receptions, magnificent banquets and elegant balls that had become a major feature of upper-class society in the late 19th century. For the foreign consuls in particular, there was the pomp and splendour of the ceremonies of presenting their letters of accreditation to Abdeen Palace. They would arrive in "a ceremonial four-horse carriage" and be received by the khedive, "surrounded by his ministers and members of the royal court, all in full official uniform and medals." After the new consul presented his letters of accreditation, he and the khedive would exchange short, prepared speeches.

Frequently the consuls were hosts to one another. *Al-Ahram*'s society columns were replete with reports on the various banquets hosted by these political luminaries. One read, "His excellency the consul of Belgium has hosted a luxurious banquet in the Restaurant Sante in honour of Monsieur Reversee, the consul-general of France." Another reads, "The

## Al-Ahram: A Diwan of contemporary life

Under the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, like other provinces subject to Istanbul, received only a small number of foreign consuls. For the most part these consuls came to Egypt as emissaries from their embassies in the Ottoman capital, and generally to supervise the commercial relations between Egypt and the foreign nations they represented. Given the nature of their concerns and their relatively temporary tenure, most consulate headquarters at the time were located in Alexandria.

Due to the instability that prevailed in Egypt during the latter half of the 18th century, international powers would close their consulates for various lengths of time. Indeed, the French consul's repeated reports to his government complaining of the maltreatment to which French merchants were subjected by the Mamelukes provided Napoleon with the pretext for launching his famous expedition for the conquest of Egypt in 1798.

With the advent of Mohamed Ali in 1805 and the rise of Egypt as a modern state during the first half of the 19th century, the situation began to change. Within only a few decades, Mohamed Ali was able to drastically reverse the fortunes of Egypt. With European assistance, he was able to restructure the army and build a modern military machine that enabled him to transform Egypt into a regional power from the Taurus mountains in the north to the Nile delta in the south. He also laid the foundations of a modern economy and paved the way for the introduction of capitalism, which in turn led to growing commercial links with the West and a rapid increase in European interests in Egypt.

These developments reflected themselves in important transformations in the nature of foreign representation in Egypt. Egypt's rising status merited a comparable rise in the level of diplomatic representation. Instead of ordinary consular officials, there were now "consuls-general and political representatives" who had a broad range of diplomatic jurisdiction in addition to their consular functions. Also, no longer were they subject to their embassies in Istanbul. Rather, they communicated directly with their ministry of foreign affairs in London, Paris, Vienna, St Petersburg and elsewhere.

The volume of diplomatic representation increased rapidly. By the 1830s, in addition to the four major powers of the time, Sardinia, Holland, Spain, Sweden, Sicily, Tuscany, Denmark, Prussia, Greece and the United States all had consuls-general in Egypt. In response to these growing diplomatic and commercial links with Western countries, the government in 1826 established the Department of Commerce and Foreign Affairs which would eventually become the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This was the first such ministry in a country that was still officially an Ottoman province. Like the consular missions themselves, it took

Alexandria as its headquarters. Nor did the situation reach a plateau. As events of the second half of the century were to prove, the world of diplomatic representation would become increasingly vast and intricate. Consular headquarters, from being merely foreign commercial offices, would become the backdrop to great power intrigue, conflicting interests and complicated human relations. In its portrayal of this world, *Al-Ahram* does much to fill in the finer details.

Numerous developments contributed to the transformation of the world of "their excellencies the foreign consuls in Egypt" during the latter half of the 19th century, culminating during the reign of Khedive Ismail. Lucrative commercial interests attracted a large influx of Europeans, firstly to Alexandria, but eventually to all parts of the country. Mansura, Zaqaziq, Dammanhur and other cities in the Delta, and Minya, Assiut, Luxor and other cities of Upper Egypt. The burgeoning foreign communities, or "dependants" as they were called at the time, expanded the previously restricted horizons of the consular general.

Egypt also became the scene for the playing-out of the political rivalries among foreign powers. Britain and France were the major protagonists, particularly in the wake of the British occupation in 1882 when Britain was seeking to consolidate its hegemony and France was doing its utmost to gum up the wheels of the British colonial administration. However, other major powers — Italy, Russia, Germany and Austria — were brought in as a supporting cast. The growing diplomatic portfolio of the consuls-general would play an important role in how events unfolded.

Many of these events were played out against the backdrop of the pomp and splendour of Ismail's court with its Europeanised etiquette and protocol. Then, too, there were the grand receptions and elegant bal-soirees that marked the social calendars of the European and Egyptian upper crust.

In contrast, the capitulations system brought the consuls-general into contact with the gritty-gritty of the daily lives of the expatriate communities in Egypt. Under the capitulations system, foreigners enjoyed immunity from the Egyptian law enforcement agencies and from prosecution in the national courts. Part of the job of the consuls-general was to ensure the protection of their expatriate subjects. The extent to which they exercised the powers granted to them by the capitulations system, as *Al-Ahram* accounts will tell us, demonstrates the degree to which it impaired Egyptian sovereignty.

Turning first to the environment of the European communities in Egypt, we note that most of them originated from the northern shores of the Mediterranean. The largest were the Greeks, a traditionally migratory people, who not only

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European influences in Egypt increased sharply in the second half of the 19th century, particularly under Khedive Ismail and even more so after British forces occupied Egypt in 1882. Foreign powers then were represented by missions headed by consuls-general. These diplomats frequently interfered in Egypt's internal affairs and played out on Egyptian soil the rivalries and conflicts that existed among their countries. Dr Yunan Labib Rizq tells the story on the basis of reports published by *Al-Ahram*

shared a portion of Egyptian history, but who were also, until the 1830s, subjects of the Ottoman Empire. Next were the Italians, who for centuries were linked to Egypt, and notably the ports of Alexandria and Damietta, by strong commercial interests. The British, or more specifically the subjects of the British Crown from Cyprus and Malta, formed the third largest community. The French community was smaller, but in terms of its economic, social and cultural influence, it was the most powerful. Finally, far fewer in numbers were the Russians, Germans and Austrians.

The primary luminaries of these communities were, of course, their consuls-general. Through its coverage of important occasions, *Al-Ahram* offers an enjoyable portrait of how these foreign representatives interrelated with their respective communities. The following account by *Al-Ahram*'s correspondent in Mansura about one of the religious celebrations of the local Greek community illustrates both the vitality of that community in the Daqahliya province and the status of the Greek consul. On 9 April 1892, he wrote, "Prayer services were held in the church and were attended by all Greek dependants, foremost among whom was his excellency the consul. Seven months later the community held 'a charity musical soiree interspersed with short plays, the proceeds of which shall be dedicated to the Greek School.' Then on 16 February 1894, the newspaper gave detailed coverage to the yearly fete of that very school. 'It was attended by dignitaries and prominent members of the Greek community, foremost among whom was the consul. Following literary recitations in Greek, Arabic and French, the evening concluded with an eloquently worded speech by the dean.'"

The Marquis de Reversee, the most illustrious of the French consuls in 1892, was always a focus of attention for *Al-Ahram*, as was the French community as a whole, given the newspaper's pro-French bias. When the consul first arrived in Alexandria, "he was greeted by a large number of French notables and consular officials" as well as representative from *Al-Ahram* who covered the occasion. *Al-*

*Ahram* also made a point of covering the anniversary of Basille Day on 14 July when the yearly celebrations would bring together French expatriates in Cairo, Alexandria, Mansura, Zaqaziq and Tanta.

Royal anniversaries were other major occasions to bring together various foreign communities. On the birthday of King Umberto of Italy, as *Al-Ahram* reports, "his excellency the consul greeted the delegations of well-wishers and sent, on their behalf, their wishes to the king for long life and happiness."

Apart from presiding over many ceremonial occasions within their communities, foreign consuls would also routinely inspect various institutions established within them. The French consul, for example, visited the numerous schools founded by his "dependants" from Alexandria down to Minya.

Wherever there were sizeable colonies of foreigners, they installed a deputy consul. For the most part the deputy consuls were foreign nationals, but it was not unusual for Egyptians to be appointed to these posts after they received the protection of the foreign embassy. Gabriel Youssef Rizq was the Portuguese deputy consul in Mansura and his son was the deputy consul of France in Tanta. In Esna, *Al-Ahram* reports, "Ibrahim Abadir, the deputy French consul, engaged Boutros Boulous, the deputy Italian consul, in a quarrel and fired two bullets at him. Fortunately he was not injured. The consul-general of France in the capital has sent a commission to investigate the matter."

The growing and vying interests of the colonial powers of this epoch made the rivalries of their representatives in Egypt no less intriguing. The Caisse de la Dene Publique, the instrument that gave Egypt's European creditors the power of authorising how it spent its revenues, was the focus of many of their rivalries. The consuls-general represented their countries on this commission and the French representative, in collusion with his Russian colleague, would wield their influence on the Caisse to obstruct British colonial enterprises in Egypt. The most famous occasion was when those two consuls-general refused to approve funds

The author is a professor of history and head of Al-Ahram History Studies Centre.



A flurry of diplomatic activity in the region this week brought no breakthrough on the stalled Syrian-Israeli track. Atef Sakr in Damascus looks at Jordanian-Syrian reconciliation efforts while Caroline Faraj in Amman rounds up the Hussein-Netanyahu meeting

## Empty offers?

Most of the outstanding issues between Jordan and Israel appeared to be headed for solutions after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who promised to remove obstacles to building economic cooperation between the two countries, concluded his visit to Amman on Monday.

The Israeli prime minister — who held talks with King Hussein of Jordan, Crown Prince Hassan, Jordan's Prime Minister Abdel-Karim Kabbani and other senior officials — gave public assurances regarding several issues that are of concern to Jordan.

At a joint press conference with Netanyahu after the talks, the king signalled that he was satisfied with the outcome of the discussions. The Jordanian monarch said that Netanyahu had reiterated his commitment to peace and to "all that was agreed upon and his desire to continue in building what was achieved in the peace process."

Hussein stated "Now we are in the decision-making stage" and that Jordan will continue to cooperate and "exert every possible effort to achieve comprehensive peace with the participation of all concerned parties."

Netanyahu promised to remove bureaucratic obstacles in the way of the kingdom's trade with Israel and the Palestinian territories and said he was determined to "breathe new life into the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty."

A small group of activists led by members of the Islamic Action Front staged a demonstration in front of government offices to protest Netanyahu's first visit to Jordan since his election in June.

Netanyahu said that his government was committed to honouring all agreements that Israel had made with the Palestinians and that a recent Israeli decision to end the freeze on settlement construction did not imply building new settlements in the West Bank. He called on Syria to resume peace negotiations on the Israeli-Syrian track.

Observers told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that Jordan believes it has a dual role in the quest for peace. "The Kingdom would like its peace with Israel to mature to an extent that would convince Israelis that warm and friendly relations with Arabs are possible," they said. "Jordan also would like to convince Arab countries that peace with Israel would restore all territorial and other rights to them," they added.

Information Minister Marwan Muasher said that "Jordan is willing and ready to use its good relations with the Palestinians, Syrians, Lebanese and Israelis to push the peace process ahead."

King Hussein and Netanyahu also said that Jerusalem should not be redivided, but the king reiterated Jordan's position that the future of the Holy City should be determined in the final status negotiations between Israel and Palestinians.

Meanwhile Netanyahu pointedly referred to Jordan's "special role" in the Muslim holy places as cited in the Washington Declaration that the Kingdom and Israel signed in June 1994, paving the way for signing of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty in October that year.

King Hussein said he would convey what he learnt from Ne-

tanyahu to "our Palestinian brothers and to anyone who asks."

The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) had protested the reference to Jordan in the context of Jerusalem. The controversy subsided after Jordan assured the PLO that its role in Jerusalem was strictly in the religious context that does not infringe upon the political rights of the Palestinians in the Holy City.

Since then, very little public references were made to the Washington Declaration in an obvious bid not to reignite the controversy, while the PNA has appointed its own people to run the administration of Muslim holy places in Jerusalem.

One of the main issues that Jordanian officials were trying to clarify after the Likud came to power was the Israeli doctrine that "Jordan is Palestine".

Muasher reaffirmed Jordan's position on that issue and said "Jordan is Palestine" is not in our dictionary at all, and we don't want to hear it any more.

King Hussein was quoted several times saying: "We have given our Palestinian brothers all the help and assistance possible, in their long years of struggle, and in their quest for peace. We shall continue to support them, and to support their sole legitimate representative, the PLO, until they gain their full political rights on their national soil. In doing all this, we have no ambitions nor designs. Nor do we seek by any means to interfere in their internal matters."

Jordanian writer Rami Khouri said that the peace treaty with Israel "has killed and buried the Israeli inclination towards, and the Jordanian fear of, the doctrine that Jordan is Palestine."

"This is a major existential and national gain for Jordan," said Khouri. "It is also a crucial impetus to force Israelis to come to grips with the fact that the core Zionist-Palestinian conflict must be resolved through territorial and political compromises in Israel and Palestine, rather than via the traditional Zionist penchant for dumping the Palestinian people and their political rights on neighbouring Arab lands," he added.

He explained that "the corollary to the 'Jordan is Palestine' view is the Zionist commitment to the concept of a 'Greater Israel', in which Palestinian lands and rights are viewed as a minor domestic issue that can be resolved through the granting of autonomy to the Palestinians."

Yet an Arab diplomat told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that "despite the rhetoric on both sides, there is a feeling that both Arabs and Israelis are determined to pursue the goal of peace."

"We think that it is up to Israel — the occupying power in the West Bank, Gaza, South Lebanon and the Golan — to respond to the Arab's genuine desire for peace," the source added.

## Mending fences

Only days after Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat concluded talks with Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad, it was King Hussein of Jordan's turn to engage the Syrian leader.

On his first official visit to Syria in two years, the Jordanian monarch arrived in Damascus this week for talks with Assad. Relations between the two leaders had been frosty since Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994. Though no breakthroughs were made on the Syrian and Lebanese peace tracks, both leaders agreed on the necessity of a just and comprehensive peace.

Bilateral relations and the Middle East peace process topped the Assad-Hussein agenda. Hussein was accompanied by a high-level delegation which conducted various discussions with their Syrian counterparts on security and water issues.

The meeting of the security committees of both states addressed Jordanian allegations that Palestinian opposition groups based in Damascus were behind a number of attacks on targets in Jordan. Jordan had presented a list of suspects to Syrian officials at the Arab summit in Cairo last June.

Assad reportedly expressed his surprise at the allegations which Hussein brought up during their meeting, a Syrian diplomat told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. Syria has always denied involvement in the attacks.

Meanwhile, diplomatic sources revealed that Syria has recently arrested a number of Hamas and Jihad activists in Damascus. Diplomats described discussions between the two heads of state on security issues as

positive and a step towards resolving Syrian-Jordanian differences. These meetings were attended by the Syrian and Jordanian chiefs of staff who also addressed the question of border infiltration.

The Jordanian and Syrian ministers of water discussed reviving the 1987 agreement on sharing the waters of the Yarmouk river which rises in Syria and flows in Israel and Jordan.

The Yarmouk provides 475 million cubic metres of water annually. Under the 1987 Jordanian-Syrian accord, it was agreed that Syria will build 28 dams along the Yarmouk to store 164 million cubic metres of water for irrigation.

Reliable sources told the *Weekly* that Jordan is currently building a dam capable of storing 200 million cubic metres along the Yarmouk. While Jordan will secure the re-served water, Syria will obtain 75 per cent of the electrical power generated by the dam. Work on the power-generating tunnel has already commenced.

Behind closed doors Assad and Hussein reviewed the peace process. While there were no reports from Syria confirming that the leaders discussed Israel's "Lebanon First" proposal, news agencies reported that Hussein acknowledged that it had been discussed. Proposed a month ago, Lebanon First is Israel's bid to break the deadlock on the Syrian-Israeli track. It entails first discussing a settlement in Lebanon, where Syria maintains nearly 40,000 troops and Israel occupies a border enclave in the south of the country. Under this settlement Israel would

withdraw from south Lebanon while Syria would ensure that Hezbollah would no longer attack Israel.

A Syrian source said that the Syrian and Lebanese position is that there will be no peace with Lebanon without Syria, meaning that Israel must agree to withdraw from the Golan Heights as well.

In a move that consolidated their joint positions, Lebanese President Elias Hrawi met with Assad in Damascus a few days after the Assad-Hussein meeting. Both leaders rejected the Lebanon First option. Hrawi described it as an attempt by Israel to undermine the good relations between Damascus and Beirut.

Though Hussein had hoped to play the role of a mediator between Syria and Israel, the Jordanian monarch left with no message to Prime Minister Binayatin Netanyahu from Assad.

While the Assad-Hussein meeting resulted in no tangible progress in the stalled peace process, it enhanced Syrian-Jordanian relations. The necessity of achieving a comprehensive and just peace is an issue on which both Assad and Hussein agree. It is a view shared by Arab leaders and Arab public opinion.

The Hussein-Assad meeting, which comes on the heels of the Arafat-Assad meeting also held in Damascus this month, is an indication that relations between the front-line states are improving. Israeli withdrawal from all Arab territories to pre-1967 borders, including the Golan Heights, is one issue on which they all agree.

## Arafat's victims

Seeds of civil strife are sprouting in the self-rule areas as Palestinian Authority implements methods. Sherine Bahaa reviews the latest events

The death of two Palestinians at the hands of Palestinian security forces was the straw that broke the camel's back.

Conjuring up memories of the Intifada, demonstrations and riots engulfed the autonomous areas. But this time protests were directed at the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) rather than Israeli occupiers.

Deteriorating economic conditions after months of the Israeli-imposed closure of the West Bank and Gaza, diminishing prospects of Palestinian statehood under Likud, corruption under Palestinian rule and the brutality of Arafat's security forces are all at the root of the latest Palestinian uprisings against the PNA.

Mahmoud Jumayel, 26, died last week after being tortured by police while in detention in a Palestinian prison in the West Bank town of Nablus. Ibrahim Ali-Hadadya, a Hamas member, was shot a day later by Palestinian police during a riot outside the prison in Tulkarm.

"Temper was more aroused than during the Intifada," said one witness. A crowd of 7,000 jammed a hillside cemetery in the West Bank city of Nablus for the funeral of Jumayel. According to observers, the funeral demonstrated the increasing anger at the PNA which only seven months ago was welcomed into Nablus.

In a statement received by *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Amnesty International called for an independent public inquiry into the incident. Amnesty pointed out the unsatisfactory outcome of the previous investigations ordered by the PNA after other deaths in custody.

At least 1,000 people are still being held in Palestinian prisons. These prisoners have not been charged with any offense, their access to legal counsel is often limited and most have never been tried.

Elizabeth Hodgkin, a member of Amnesty International in the self-rule areas, told the *Weekly* that most of these prisoners were arrested after the suicide bombings which killed around 60 Israelis last February and March. "There were pressure from outside on the PNA to arrest members of Islamic groups who are believed to

be involved in those attempts," she said.

Yet, "nothing excuses keeping people in prison without being tried or legally charged. We say they should be tried or immediately released," says Hodgkin.

Jumayel had been held without charge since December, and was said to be part of a group linked to Arafat's main PLO faction, Fatah, which was accused of shooting and killing suspected collaborators with the Israeli authorities in Nablus last year. Jumayel is the seventh person to die of torture in the custody of the PNA.

Human rights organisations have received numerous reports describing the cruelty of Palestinian police forces inside prisons. "I saw photos of Jumayel's body," says Hodgkin. "It was blackened with very few patches of his body with the colour of normal skin. You could see the signs of cigarette marks and electric shocks."

Though Arafat's decision to release around 20 Hamas prisoners was interpreted as an attempt to abate anger in the West Bank, more than 200 Hamas members were detained on the same day.

In the meantime, the Land and Water Establishment, a Palestinian human rights group, issued a statement expressing concern at the growing violence exercised by the Palestinian police towards Palestinian civilians.

Alerted by mounting tension in the self-rule areas, the military establishment in Israel is worried about a possible escalation of riots against the PNA in the north of the West Bank which could spread to the centre and south of the territory.

"The organised chaos of Arafat is preferable to total anarchy which could well impose itself," a senior Israeli military official told Israeli army radio.

"I can tell you there is organised torture in Arafat's prisons," says Hosam Khadr, a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council.

"I myself am a veteran of Israeli prisons and I was arrested by the Israelis on 23 occasions. What is happening in our prisons now is much worse than what we experienced in Israeli jails during the 27 years of occupation," said Khadr.



Members from the Islamic Action Front Party protest against Netanyahu's visit during a sit-in outside government offices in Amman (photo: Reuters)

## Tehran finds friends

The mullahs are in good company thanks to tougher US trade sanctions, reports Samia Nkrumah

The United States has followed up its latest accusations against Iran with action. After implicating Iran in almost every single act of terrorism hitting US targets at home and abroad over the past few weeks, US President Bill Clinton this week signed a bill aimed at deterring investment in Iran and Libya. The bill, which was passed by Congress a few weeks ago, now becomes law, requiring the government to penalise foreign companies that invest \$40 million or more annually in either country's oil or gas industries.

No one doubts that this time round the US is mainly targeting Iran and not Libya. Adding fuel to the fire, the US has put its forces in the Gulf on a state of alert in preparation for an "imminent" attack. A few days ago, US Defence Secretary William Perry hinted that Iran might have been involved in the 25 June blast that claimed the lives of 19 Americans in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. The results of investigations into the incident are expected soon.

There is, of course, nothing new about American accusations against Iran. Iran has been on America's list of states sponsoring terrorism for a few years. Last year, the US imposed a trade and investment ban on the country.

Over the last few years, the Clinton administration has stepped up its policy of isolating Iran. The two main charges directed at Iran are that it sponsors terrorist groups and that it is stockpiling chemical and biological weapons. The US also alleges that Iran is attempting to acquire long-range ballistic missiles to be stored in tunnels built along the Persian Gulf coastline.

America charges that Iran is a leading proponent of

"international terrorism", but evidence of this is inconclusive and relies on investigations carried out by American intelligence agencies. It is difficult to point the finger of blame confidently at any one party in the cases of the TWA 800 disaster, the Atlanta bombing or the Dhahran explosion.

The case against Iran has left many unconvinced. Other Western powers disagree with the US's methods of combating terrorism and its approach towards Iran; sanctions harm European and Japanese economic interests in Iran. Arab countries, for their part, fear the new US law will create greater instability in the region and further tilt the balance of power in the Middle East towards Israel.

France, Germany, Britain, Italy and Japan have declared that the new law gives the American legislature extra-territorial powers and is in conflict with international trade regulations.

From an American standpoint, pressure on Iran might weaken the country's hardliners and boost the chances of the moderate camp in next year's Iranian general elections. Again, many are sceptical.

The Iranian political leadership does not have a monolithic character; the moderates wish to see the role of the clergy curtailed and distanced from the state. But dissent is only permitted within the clergy and not outside the system.

The mullahs have over the years held a unanimous position even when the 1979 Islamic Revolution took place. But the different views are under the surface and are not reflected in Tehran's public policy. The media is controlled by the clerical leadership. Last year, there were great expectations that the moderates would gain

ground. But a few months before the elections, the media alienated them by accusing them of wanting to normalise relations with the US and impair religious codes," commented El-Sebai Mohamed El-Sebai, a professor of Iranian studies at Cairo University, who was in Iran six months ago.

"Trade sanctions do hurt Iranians. Inflation is running at a high 50 per cent annually, debts are mounting, but state subsidies are effective in making compensations," he added.

Under European pressure, the US's unilateral sanctions are likely to become more flexible. In any case, financial analysts say that the ban on foreign companies does not apply to contracts which have already been signed. Accordingly, the French oil company Total will go ahead with its investment in Iranian oil deposits. Total clinched the deal after the American oil company Conoco withdrew.

Meanwhile, Iran has been edging closer to the Islamic and Arab worlds. Turkey's Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan is due in Tehran in a few days. Tehran, heartened by their check on normalising relations with Israel, is also courting Oman and Qatar. Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri, the hardline Iranian parliament speaker elected last March, and Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati are due to visit Oman in the next few months.

Is appealing to the American voter and the Jewish lobby so important that Clinton will risk antagonising some of his most powerful allies? "The US knows that its latest move will be frowned upon, but this is a critical year for the US, as it is for Iran. Electoral considerations are paramount," said El-Sebai.

## Murder in God's name

After condemning the murder of French Bishop Pierre Claverie in South Algeria last week, most observers agreed that given the grisly political reality in Algeria today, the bishop was lucky his throat was not slit.

Although security forces have not yet arrested the perpetrators, all fingers point to the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), Algeria's most violent radical Islamist group, formed in the aftermath of the cancellation of the 1992 elections which the Islamists were poised to win.

Claverie did not play any political role, but, like seven other French monks who were kidnapped and killed six months ago, his murder is part of attempts to sabotage Algerian-French diplomatic relations.

The murder is also a response to official Algerian statements which have assured the "successful" elimination of terrorist groups. The bishop was killed immediately after he returned from a visit with French Foreign Minister Hervé de Charette who was in Algiers. A bomb was thrown at Claverie's house killing him and his driver.

The murder of a French bishop in Algeria last week was only a prelude to the Armed Islamic Group's renewed strategy, writes Amira Howeldy

Claverie's murder also comes a few days after the appointment of GIA's new emir, Antar Al-Zawabir, a former officer who served in the Algerian army. Zawabir's predecessor, Gamal Al-Zaitouni was reported killed earlier last week.

Zaitouni, known as one of the most violent leaders of the GIA, was said to have personally killed the 7 monks because of his skill in "throat slitting". His rein from 1994-6 is considered the GIA's bloodiest years. At his hands, the circle of violence expanded to target clergymen and popular figures who were not involved in politics — which was not the group's common practice.

Zaitouni did not only target the group's enemies. After declaring "war" on the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) and its armed wing, he then turned against the GIA's factions and former FIS members who joined the GIA. At the end of last year, he claimed responsibility

for the murder of two former FIS members who joined the GIA for "plotting a coup inside the group".

But as much as Zaitouni's era was vicious, it was equally shrouded in mystery. According to Qosey Saleh El-Darwish, an expert on Algerian affairs who lives in Paris, Algerian security forces had announced Zaitouni's death three times before.

"Mystery surrounds his death as did his sudden appearance and domination of the most extremist group and his blind practice of terrorism in its ugliest, most savage forms," El-Darwish said. Zaitouni, according to El-Darwish's "informed sources", was killed three years ago "and [recent] pictures published in the press are of his brother, Mustafa."

This mystery also colours allegations that Zaitouni enjoyed relations with security authorities. According to El-Darwish, many ob-

servers were suspicious since the leader's crimes seemingly served "the interests of the regime's hard-liners opposed to dialogue [with the Islamists]." And, El-Darwish added, Zaitouni's predecessor was murdered "after security forces received 'too much' detailed information about the GIA's movements."

With the assassination of the priest, the death toll of foreign clergymen killed in Algeria reached 19. The GIA "war" against them was first waged in March 1994, with the coming of Zaitouni.

An Algerian lawyer who spoke on the condition of anonymity, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that there are general doubts in the Algerian street concerning the actual penetration of the GIA by security forces. "More questions are asked regarding whether the army hard-liners were behind the formation of the group," he said. The lawyer added that the GIA which is now divided into various groups "cannot be controlled by the security forces any more."

Nevertheless he said, most people in Algeria fear further bloodshed, "which has escalated sharply during the past two months."

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# One of God's creatures

General Aideed's life story read like a gripping thriller and his tragic end was like a bad soap opera, writes **Gamal Nkrumah**



Followers, friends and relatives of the late General Aideed pay their respects last Friday at his final resting place in Mogadishu (photo AFP)

General Mohamed Farah Aideed's world was a battleground. He refused to play the role of America's whipping boy in the Horn of Africa. Aideed challenged America as no African leader did in the 1990s and led his people's protestations against American intervention. He humiliated Uncle Sam and kept his humanity intact. Yes, Aideed had a couple of hundred thousand dollars stashed away in American bank accounts. So what? Yes, some of Aideed's 14 children had green cards and were living it up in America even as he routed the American-led United Nations misadventure in Somalia. Yes, one of his four wives, his third, Khadija Said Garban, has a flourishing import-export business in the United States. But can one really hold these facts as grievances against any African leader today?

Aideed was a man who aroused strong emotions both in his native Somalia and abroad. He raised hackles when his militiamen slew 18 US marines in the aftermath of an American assault on one of his hiding places in October 1993. US troops pulled out of Somalia in March 1994. They put a price on Aideed's head and began a manhunt to capture him. After I met Aideed soon thereafter, in the Ugandan capital, Kampala, in April 1994, I made up my mind that whatever his shortcomings I liked the man. Many others are not so sure. I requested and was immediately granted an interview with Africa's most wanted man — then on the run. I was no internationally respected *chance* grifter among reporters, but I was a son of a fellow anti-imperialist leader and he twinkled knowingly. I was spellbound by his hair-raising accounts of the Somali civil war. I took some of his boasts with a pinch of salt. I knew he was a ruthless warlord and that he had many human failings. But I knew that he was operating under tremendous pressures — challenges that would make any American politician's daily intrigues pale into insignificance.

There is controversy, in Somalia and the rest of

Africa, about whether Aideed was actually an anti-imperialist hero. But all are agreed that Aideed was a unique symbol of national resilience. The US had a \$25,000 reward out for General Aideed's capture — "dead or alive". Some 100 Blue Helmets perished in Somalia from the time the UN force landed on the country's Indian Ocean shores in 1992 until it unceremoniously vacated the country in 1994. Last year Aideed declared himself president of Somalia, a claim disputed by his rival Ali Mahdi Mohamed. All know that like any other African leader of Aideed's genre, his supporters and admirers argue his case out of sheer sentimentality.

Soon after the Blue Helmets withdrew from Somalia, Aideed phoned the head of the Arab Human Rights Organisation, Mohamed Baig, and complained bitterly that the UN force deliberately damaged all property and equipment to make them unusable. Petrol tanks were emptied, tugs and destroyed and telephone lines cut. Even computers and other office equipment were smashed up in vengeful outbursts.

Let's put Aideed in his proper historical perspective. In the leftist jargon so prevalent in African political circles of yesterday, Aideed was a "petit bourgeois" and proud of it. He was in some people's eyes an upstart who made a hit of money, took on America's might and in an impoverished and war-torn nation became a living legend. It was his fellow classman Osman Hassan Ali "Atto" who first funded Aideed's war against America. Atto later turned against Aideed and became one of his worst enemies. Somalis make fierce fighters.

The world was dumfounded when it watched on television the body of an American marine being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu. Never since the American defeat in Vietnam in 1975 had the US been so disgraced. The sombre episode highlighted the differences in the perception of events and the vast cultural chasm that divided

Westerners from Somalis. To the Westerners, the Somalis sometimes appeared unruly and brutish; there was little appreciation of the harsh realities of life in the impoverished East African country. "Life is cheap and the will of Allah is inexorable accepted with the fatalism that is part of their strength," wrote the British surgeon who invented the Flying Doctor service in East Africa Sir Michael Wood, about the Somalis.

In pre-colonial days, the Somali raids on other East African peoples left their neighbours unimpressed. Few could resist the Somalis' fearsome and foraging forays. The colonialists' "tax, brush and Italian" were given a good hiding by various Somali warlords and tribal leaders. Aideed was born in 1934, at a time when the warring Somali nomadic tribesmen were being pacified. The son of a chieftain, Aideed nevertheless grew up as any other Somali herdsboy and, with his many brothers and cousins, tended his father's large camel herds. He later crossed into the Ethiopian region inhabited by ethnic Somalis, the Oozden, where he became a chieftain. He was introduced to the Arabic language. Subsequently, he learnt Italian as a policeman in the provincial market town of Gulkayo and later enlisted in the Italian *gendarmaria*. Next, Aideed was introduced to English when he did a stint as a handyman for British officers at the Wadling Military Barracks in Mogadishu. Mastering Arabic, English and Italian, the stage was set for Aideed's initiation into the anti-colonial struggle and he joined the Somali Youth League, a political group of young Somali nationalists who spearheaded the struggle for Somalia's independence.

Aideed had a checkered political career. His big break came when he was sent to Moscow as military attaché to the Somali Embassy. Aideed had come under the protective wings of his erstwhile benefactor, General Abdullah Dawoud, Somalia's first national army commander. The latter took Aideed with him on important trips abroad. "It was at

that time that I visited Egypt, and came to love the country and the Egyptian people and culture," Aideed told me. "It was at that time that I met the late President Gamal Abdel Nasser, and was impressed and inspired by his brilliant anti-imperialist outlook." Dawoud sent Aideed for military staff training at Freetown Military Academy in the then British colony of Sierra Leone. On his return to his homeland, he got into trouble, being accused of plotting a coup. Former Somali President Mohamed Siad Barre incarcerated Aideed between 1968 and 1976. After a political comeback, during Somalia's war with Ethiopia, he served as Somalia's ambassador to India. Next, Aideed was promoted to cabinet minister and ultimately he became Barre's intelligence chief. Later, Aideed fled again from Siad Barre.

Aideed was to rise again. He headed the United Somali Congress Somali National Alliance (USC-SNA), which is dominated by members of the Habr-Gadid clan of the Hawiye tribe — the largest of the six major tribal groupings that ethnic Somalis are divided into. The USC-SNA has announced on its radio station that Aideed's son, Hussein, who is 35, has succeeded his father as leader. Hussein is a former US marine reservist, who served in Somalia. The Hawiye predominate in the Somali capital Mogadishu and inhabit the southern and central regions of Somalia. In Somalia, political groups generally coincide with tribal affiliations. Of the groups that attempted to oust Barre, the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) was made up predominantly of members of the Mijerteen tribe from central Somalia and the Somali National Movement (SNM) was mainly composed of members of the Isaaq tribe from northern Somalia. Key government and army positions were held by members of Barre's own Marehan tribe. The SSDF was the first to organise a rebellion against the aging Barre and was ruthlessly dealt with by the leader. The SNM was the second group in challenge Barre's dictatorship and was

similarly crushed after a brief but bloody battle by the former Ethiopian ruler Mengistu Haile Mariam.

Aideed's first wife was instrumental in the ousting of Barre, who ruled Somalia for 21 years, in January 1991. Aideed and Khadija fled with Barre in the past. Barre was notorious for his Utuun swarms from socialism to capitalism playing one superpower against the other and accumulating a huge arsenal of both Soviet and Western armaments — a bloody booty which was later seized and used by Somalia's warring factions against each other in fratricidal fighting.

Today, about half a million Somali refugees in refugee camps in neighbouring countries and thousands are political and economic exiles in Western countries and the Gulf Cooperative Council states. An estimated three in four Somalis are internally displaced. Aideed's followers feel that America was directly responsible for the demise of Somalia's fortunes because it backed the dictatorship of Barre, which emptied the country's coffers. "God will destroy Washington," Aideed raged in 1993. That was his battle cry to his dying day.

"We hope that perhaps with the demise of General Aideed, the Somali people will be given an opportunity to figure out their own future and that a broad-based government can be formed to free this 'looming suffering country' from the factional fighting," said US State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns. "If a broad-based government can be formed, then I think the US would be in a position to reconsider its diplomatic approach, and perhaps to heighten its own political activity there." Burns added that Washington had no immediate plan to restore diplomatic relations with Somalia.

"We clearly hope that, while we regret the demise of any of God's creatures, his removal from the scene can set the foundation for a more peaceful future for Somalia," White House official David Johnson said.

## Imperialism and sex in Africa

By **Nawal El-Saadawi**

A few years ago, while I was addressing an international women's conference, I made a link between then United States President George Bush and female circumcision. Many people laughed; they did not see the link. But for me the link was as clear as the link I had established since the early days of my childhood between the political and economic power structure and the oppression of women.

In Menouf, where I grew up, I went to a British primary school. Every morning at assembly, Mr. Hamer, the principal, would subject us to readings from the Bible. We had more classes in religion than in any other subject. Hence, obedience was the most praised virtue. Obedience to God was linked to obedience to all other authorities, starting from the British principal down to my father and mother. But Mr. Hamer respected my mother less than my father. Although the principal was a woman, she looked down upon her own sex and raised up the flag of Great Britain. She told us that we Egyptians and Africans were morally and mentally debased, that we were barbaric and uncivilized and that the British had come to Egypt to civilize us. I was nine years old and the year was 1940.

In April 1996, Jacques Chirac, the French president, came to Egypt for a visit. At that time, some Egyptian upper-class intellectuals started saying that the French had come to Egypt to civilize us and that Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt was fundamentally an emancipatory and not a colonial project. Their talk reminded me of Mr. Hamer's talk more than half a century ago. But history has shown us that the imperialists do not come to our countries to emancipate us. De Lesseps built the Suez Canal under Khedive Ismail to open Egypt up to colonial rule in 1882, when Britain occupied Egypt. Through technical superiority in warfare, the imperialists were able to wage savage, barbaric wars against us. They were able to commit atrocities in order to force open the doors of our countries, not only for unequal trade and unprecedented material plunder, but for sexual and cultural exploitation.

Imperialist scholars, wrote about us Africans as morally, mentally and sexually debased people, barbaric and uncivilized — ignoring their own barbaric, uncivilized aggression against our women and men. And they used old patriarchal customs like female circumcision to label us and justify their colonization as an emancipatory effort. In their peculiar version of newspeak, they call African popular uprisings and freedom fighters "terrorist", while imperialist wars and massacres are legal actions to be praised by God and the powers that be.

The results of a 1987 study showed that the rate

of female circumcision increased in Egypt with the revival of "religious fundamentalism". And some people believe that the Bush administration supported fundamentalist groups both at the national and the international levels to support their fight against communism, the Soviet Union and worldwide democratic movements. Modern or post-modern capitalism is a neo-colonial system based on the old patriarchal class and family values. Economic and sexual exploitation of women and the poor are linked and both lie at the core of this system, which could never have been maintained to this day without a whole range of cruel devices that are used to keep women's sexuality in check.

As a physician I have been struggling and writing for more than 30 years against female circumcision and other dehumanising rites which deprive millions of women all over the world of one of their basic human rights: the right to their bodies. It has often been proclaimed that female circumcision only occurs in black African or Muslim societies. But, in fact, it is performed on women regardless of their race or religion. When I was in primary school in Egypt, all the girls were circumcised, whether they were Christian, Jewish or Muslim. In African and Asian countries, circumcision is performed on girls who believe in one god as well as those who believe in polytheistic religions.

Women in Europe and America are not exempt from this practice. It is estimated that in the US approximately 40,000 women are circumcised every year. Most of them are immigrants from different parts of the world. Many women who are not necessarily subjected to the surgical removal of the clitoris are victims of psychological clitoridectomy. Sigmund Freud promoted the psychological circumcision of women when he maintained that their maturity and mental health required that clitoral orgasms be transferred to the vagina. In effect, the abolition of the functions of the clitoris is equal to its absence. Hence, psychological clitoridectomy may even be considered more detrimental than the physical version because it produces the illusion of leaving the body intact, while at the same time an essential organ, I am against all types of circumcision including male circumcision, which is not as detrimental as female circumcision, but it is still harmful and may cause serious complications. Cutting off any part of the human body for non-medical reasons should be considered a crime. I oppose all attempts to deal with female circumcision or any other sexual problem in isolation, severing it from its links with

its historical, economic and political determinants.

Many people say that we live in the post-colonial era. But in Africa we are still in the colonial or neo-colonial era. Imperialism changes its methods and colours, but it maintains its basic patriarchal class capitalist philosophy: God, sex and the king. The king may be called the president, and God may be called the superpower, and sex may be replaced by gender. However, the link is there. Imperialism as a class patriarchal system cannot survive without the sexual and economic exploitation of women and the poor.

Africa is looked upon as the poorest of the poor, although it is in reality one of the richest continents. The riches of Africa have been robbed by imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism. It currently has a per capita income of less than \$1 per day. Neo-colonial institutions such as the World Bank have ruined the economy of Africa. Historically, Africa was one of the continents most ruined by imperialism. This was not only due to military and economic exploitation, but also to social, cultural and sexual exploitation. If there is something the imperialists fear more than anything else, it is the power of knowledge in the conduct of public and private affairs among colonised women and men.

Female circumcision in Africa has become a profit-making business for imperialists. It can be a sensational subject on the CNN. Sex in Africa can be discussed as a cultural or multi-cultural issue. The imperialists are experts in separating gender from economic, political and power relations. There is no danger in organising conferences on African culture, where we watch African dances, listen to African music, gaze at the beautiful black woman and enjoy virtual "sexual liberation" — all in the name of experiencing diversity and cultural differences.

Gender, culture, African festivals and conferences become an exhibition, a spectacle, a consumer product. But the prominence of Africans in dance, music and sports equals their exclusion from the decision-making process of military and economic power.

I still remember the words of Mumia Abu-Jamal, the African-American activist and journalist, when he was waiting to die as he sat in his cell on death row. "The spirit of freedom, of human liberation cannot be held in one vessel," he said. "It is like holding air in a glass; the rest of the area around that glass is not a vacuum; it doesn't stop there. It's the same for the spirit of revolution. I am just one vessel. There are many other vessels. Let's keep pouring it on and pouring it on until it becomes the air we breathe."

The writer is a leading Arab feminist



### Purges

GAMBIA President Yahya Jammeh announced last week in the Gambian capital, Banjul, the dismissal of his Health Minister Njinsassata Samneh Bojang from her post. Also removed were three of Bojang's senior aides. Bojang has since been arrested on charges of embezzling over \$100,000 in public funds. The move is part of Jammeh's anti-corruption campaign.

Bojang was replaced by Isatou Njie Saidy, previously the head of the presidency's Women's Bureau. Bojang is the third health minister to be fired since the current military regime took power in July 1994 following a coup d'etat that ousted the country's first president, Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara. In addition to the embezzlement charges, Bojang is also accused of nepotism, putting family members in jobs, and admitting to Banjul's nursing school unqualified students. Bojang's dismissal reflects a general trend in Africa where governments are applying ever stricter measures to end corruption in high places. Many African states have been purging ministerial posts of corrupt officials.

### Donation

SYRIAN-born Saudi billionaire Wafiq Said donated 20 million pounds sterling (\$31 million) to Oxford University to found a business school. The new business school, which will cater eventually for 500 students, including 150 working towards a MBA degree, should open its doors in the 1998-99 academic year, offering courses for some 40 people in the first year. Said, a fabulously rich financier and construction magnate, never gained a university degree himself, though his son Khalid has just graduated from Oxford's Balliol College.

Married to a British woman for 25 years, Said lives in the Principality of Monaco. A close personal friend of former British premier Margaret Thatcher, he helped British Aerospace win the lucrative Al-Yamamah deal with Saudi Arabia — worth some 20 billion pounds sterling. Said's gift is the largest personal donation to Oxford since Lord Nuffield gave the university three million pounds sterling in the 1930s for the creation of a medical sciences school.

## Rape as policy instrument

ALTHOUGH rape is considered a crime against humanity, it is widely used as a major weapon of war. A United Nations special investigator was recently appointed to investigate wartime sexual abuses and write a report on the subject. The author of the report, Linda Chavez, warned that in many instances soldiers have been given licence by their superiors to rape defenceless women. Organised rape is seen as an instrument of official policy. "Organised rape can be an insidious form of genocide; forced pregnancy and maternity are strategies to dilute and humiliate an ethnic group. Rape is also used to terrorise civilians," she said.

War-time rape is not new. It was a capital offence under national military codes as far back as the 14th century in Britain. In World War II, German soldiers systematically raped Belgian women and used sexual assault as a weapon of terror against other "inferior" peoples. In the same war Japan forced approximately 200,000 women, many of them Koreans, into prostitution for its soldiers.

The report says that although widespread and planned rape as a tool of war is clearly a crime against humanity, it has not been uniformly recognised as such. The report found that rape by soldiers or security forces was an "unfortunate and widespread phenomenon" in recent troubles in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Haiti, Peru and Ban-

gladesh and during the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. Bosnian Serbs have been accused of raping as many as 20,000 women and girls during the civil war in ex-Yugoslavia and leaving many pregnant as part of a campaign to force Muslim and Croat women to give birth to children who would be considered Serbs.

In a landmark decision in June, the UN International War Crimes Tribunal indicted Bosnian Serb military and police officers for systematic rape as a war crime. Systematic rape is often practised during ethnic wars. At least 200,000 women were raped by Pakistani soldiers during Bangladesh's nine-month war of secession in 1971; and rape by security forces or police has been common during internal conflicts in Peru and Haiti. The Iraqis also systematically raped Kuwaiti women during the occupation of the Gulf state in 1990 and 1991.

In Rwanda's 1994 civil war, women and even girls as young as five were frequently raped and murdered immediately afterwards. Sometimes they were gang raped in public places. Moreover, Hutu soldiers infected with the HIV virus were sent out to rape Tutsi women.

Compiled by **Heba Samir**

Edited by **Gamal Nkrumah**

For over five years, Egypt has embraced a comprehensive economic reform programme aimed at attracting foreign investment, promoting exports and encouraging private sector growth. But the price of reform has not come cheap. In Washington, Nevine Khalil spoke to Ibrahim Kamel and James Brewington, the heads of the President's Council, a joint Egyptian-US body of businessmen which came into being as part and parcel of the Gore-Mubarak Partnership for Economic Development Programme. Both are optimistic about the future, but they counsel patience and the gradual approach.

## 'A strategic choice'

How many of the recent developments and reforms in Egypt's economy can be credited to the President's Council?

We have helped to bring ideas, argue in favour of these ideas, answer the questions which could be raised with regard to the possible side effects of any new ideas. So, we are very fortunate to be able to present our points of view in a very objective manner in order to improve the situation in Egypt.

We've been very concerned with several items of legislation. One of them is related to introducing the idea of BOT (Build, Operate and Transfer). Here, the private sector would provide the financing and construction in various fields like power generation, toll roads, airports and, maybe later on, ports. This helps the government to save its own money for other priorities best tackled by the government, like education and health care.

What are specific examples of this?

Already the government and the People's Assembly approved, one month ago, private sector involvement in the building of infrastructural projects, and there are details regarding each area of their involvement. But these are only details. The important thing is that we now have government approval for private sector involvement in infrastructural projects. Getting to this point took about one year of negotiating, explaining and arguing.

What are the council's other achievements?

Changes are under way in the banking laws and today, for the first time, major international banks can own more than 50 per cent of their banking operations in Egypt. This is a major change which could encourage banks that never considered working in Egypt before to enter the market.

The government has invited the private sector to engage in the development of the northern part of the Gulf of Suez. We have already

introduced a proposal for legislation to govern the relationship between the private sector and the government. It relates to all the questions that may be encountered by those who participate in the project, while coordinating with the different government agencies concerned with security, visas, customs duties, etc.

In addition, another development is the formation of the Supreme Council for Exports, which is headed by President Mubarak. Export-related issues tend to be divided among several ministries, and it is always difficult to get all the involved parties to coordinate their efforts and to make a final decision. All you need is an authority that will say to everybody, 'This is it, and it has to be done right now.'

One of the very positive traits of this council is that it is headed by the president. Also, the number of private sector members in it exceeds those from the public sector and the government representatives combined. This, in itself, reflects a very positive change in the government's attitude towards the private sector. The confidence-building which has taken place is really improving everything.

Investment laws today are much better than ever before. President Mubarak, who chairs all meetings of the Investment Authority Board, has made it clear to everybody that he does not want to see red-tape hindering investments in Egypt. Now, virtually all projects can go to the Investment Authority and receive approval without having to go through the board. There are, however, certain projects which might have to go through the board approval process, but these are the projects that normally would not require a very fast decision-making.

How soon should we expect the Supreme Council for Exports to begin business?

I think it should be meeting very soon, maybe in the early fall. I believe that once we begin to address issues seriously, it will not be long

before we can say that Egypt's exports enjoy the best facilities and support.

Primarily, we have to give maximum support to the products which can make a difference. We have to know where our comparative advantage is, and we concentrate on these items.

One of the most important items on our agenda for exports is ready-made garments. Egypt can have a definite comparative advantage in this [field]. However, this requires some decisions which might involve several ministries in order to secure the proper support and, if the president is heading such a meeting, all these problems would be solved overnight. Then, you will see an increase in the volume and value of these exports.

Egypt also has a definite advantage in exporting fresh fruits and vegetables, especially during the winter season in Europe. However, it requires some work organisation and support which does not exist until now. From here you can go on to many other items produced in Egypt that require this sort of support, but also demand a strong marketing strategy on the part of the Egyptian manufacturer.

Will the Supreme Export Council assist in this, too?

We will definitely provide the advice, because when we talk about a Supreme Exports Council, it is supposed to not only advise the government, but everyone. The reason for this is that so far, our exports are almost irrelevant to our GNP, and we have to make it relevant.

Which markets top your list of priorities?

When you talk exports, the whole world is our target market. Even the Far East should be a target market. We need technology transfer and an [aggressive] marketing strategy, because even for the goods that we produce well in Egypt, we are not really marketing them enough. But it is coming.

What problems does the President's Council face, being a body which is very close to the executive authorities? Does the business community feel threatened by your suggestions because they feel they will be implemented immediately?

This is a problem, but it is also the best thing about this council. The council is supposed to be reporting to, and addressing, the presidents of both countries. Of course this creates an image that could intimidate people, but in reality, when we speak about the Egyptian side on this council, we would never think of proposing anything that could possibly hurt any Egyptian company.

It is very unfortunate that the pharmaceutical lobby in Egypt reacted viciously to the idea of studying the issue of shortening the grace period given in the GATT concerning patent rights. Our study could have resulted in our recommending, in the end, that the grace period not be shortened.

Why did you give up so quickly?

We didn't give up. I believe this question is still open and the study will have to take place, but in order to undertake a study that is so sensitive, you need to give it sufficient time, effort and backing. I must admit, however, that it was not the number one priority and, therefore, when the pharmaceutical lobby was up in arms, we did not react at all.

You have to keep in mind that you do not want to appear to be lobbying for the other point of view. I dare say that the media in Egypt, when the issue was raised, did not treat it fairly. The media was only listening to one side and not addressing the fact that the council was only engaged in an attempt to study, not adopt, the other point of view. Instead, everybody was furious, reacting as if we had already decided to go for immediate intellectual property rights protection, foregoing the eight or nine year grace period granted by the GATT.

What reservations did the American side of the council have about Egypt's economic conditions?

There is a list, but I would say that most of the serious impediments for investments are out of the way. At the beginning they argued that people coming to Egypt could find themselves waiting for a long time before they get investment approval. This [obstacle] has been removed. In the past, businessmen could come into the country, but could not leave with their money; the stock market in Egypt, a few years ago, was only ink on paper. Today, with a more active stock market, investors can come in and, when they want, go out. During the past year, many of the complaints received were addressed. Customs clearance procedures today are much better than they were before.

But one issue which is still pending concerns commercial disputes where Egyptian courts are heavily backlogged. We are pressing now for a fast-track type of dispute handling.

What we simply have to work on now is to make Egypt the best place on earth for foreign investment.

Have there been any unrealistic or impractical demands by the American side, that cannot be addressed immediately?

Nothing unrealistic has ever been put on the table. Of course, there will always be requests that Egypt join the global economy and free market. But I would say that agreements with the World Trade Organisation and the GATT are on this road. Whether you do this in one, two or three years, however, is another story.

Has the council faced problems with the US Congress, which is blocking any legislation to further cement the economic partnership? No, the only question that we raised, and for which we require congressional approval, is entering into se-



Ibrahim Kamel

rious negotiations for a free trade agreement. Congress is not in the mood for this now. I must add that I don't know if we are fully aware of the consequences of a free trade agreement, because we might not be able to withstand all the conditions that will be attached to such an agreement. We are raising the question to study it, but again, we do not have a firm stand on this issue. We are now favouring an approach to increase the flow of trade between our two countries, without necessarily entering into a free trade agreement. Our study should be complete in about six months.

Can we say that the council's efforts are finding ways around Egypt's dependence on US aid? No programme for foreign aid can last forever. I, for one, would like to see a good part of the foreign aid coming to Egypt remain in the U.S. to be spent on Egyptians studying there. If we think in the long-term, education is the name of the game, and we need to address this problem as soon as possible. If you ask me, I would say give the entire \$810 million (in annual economic aid) to education. But I have to sell this idea to the Egyptian government before I can sell it here [the U.S.].

But can the council's achievements replace aid to Egypt? There was never a question of the [US-Egyptian Economic] Partnership replacing US aid. Aid is one

story, and the partnership is another. The partnership is a philosophy that is far beyond any timing. It is a strategic choice which both countries and peoples have entered into. Partnership is a long-term by nature and we are partners in all our efforts for peace, development and the support of each other's economy.

Of course, Egypt might be more in need of US investments at this stage of its development, but later on, who knows. I would say that at this point in time the concept of partnership is supported by a very broad vision. This is the beauty of it.

When will the rush on the street reap the fruit of your efforts? By the end of 1996, because that's how long it takes. What has been done will make itself apparent in 1997, and by the time it is felt in the Egyptian economy, which should begin to grow at a rate of about 7 per cent, the average Egyptian will begin to feel the benefit of what is happening now.

What hopes are you planning for the economic summit in November? Hopefully the economic summit in Cairo will be the most successful summit of them all, and I think Cairo is ready for it. As far as the council is concerned, we support the summit, and whatever effort is needed on our part to make it a success, will be done with pleasure and commitment.

Has this council lived up to your expectations?

During the first year of operation, I would say it has lived up to my expectations and has moved at the pace I expected. I would say, depending on what your priorities are, that you can really assess the achievements of the council. I believe that our objectives were centred on making Egypt the best place in the world for attracting foreign investment.

Ibrahim Kamel, head of the Egyptian side of the President's Council.

## Open for business

What is your evaluation of the council's performance? When I first started as co-chairman [of the council] I had some concerns because I knew it was going to be a difficult road. But over the last six months, we have seen tremendous progress made on many of our recommendations. These recommendations, which span the spectrum, all the way from banking to intellectual property rights, are the kinds of things that will attract investments from the U.S. as well as other countries. I have never been more optimistic that there will be investments in Egypt. For us, it is somewhat of a celebration on how well things are going.

How much progress has Egypt made in removing the obstacles hindering economic development?

Several of these obstacles have been removed, but to say there are no other obstacles that need to be overcome would be an understatement. There are always obstacles that we have to work on, just as there are obstacles in most countries. Some improvements

were made, but we would like to see more done in the area of intellectual property rights, because the protection of intellectual property is very important in the high-tech business sector, particularly with regard to those dealing with software. That's where the future is.

Moreover, and I want to make this point very clear, while significant progress has already been made on cutting through red-tape and making decisions quickly, it is important to continue with this process. Business has become very global. It moves very quickly and, therefore, it's extremely important that the Egyptian government works to streamline itself so that those [key business] decisions could be made very, very rapidly.

I'm in the telecommunications industry, an industry which is moving at a pace now that none of us could have foreseen even six months ago. Today, the Internet has become a major issue on how business and communication is done and, I think in Egypt, the importance of telecommunications is being recognised. I also think it is important for Egypt

to recognise the importance of a [strong] telecommunications infrastructure because the world of data and the Internet are critical to Egypt's future.

What were the main points presented to President Mubarak and Vice-President Al-Gor when the council met with them in Washington last week?

We outlined four steps for the council. The first is continuing to make positive recommendations on improvements and reforms that can be brought about to encourage investment and the private sector. It's very important for the private sector to flourish. Although this does not always make big headlines or bring about big projects, what's important is that we open up the gates for small investors both inside and outside Egypt.

Second, we are going to encourage and help establish some major projects. Some of these have already begun, others are ones in which we want to improve the infrastructure itself, like the free trade zone, telecommunications, energy and so forth.

The third step is a more sensitive area that has to do with the government itself. For example, there are lots of actions tied up in Egyptian courts and things need to be solved very quickly. It's important that this is [addressed] so that when companies come to Egypt, they know that things can be resolved very quickly. You need to know that in all of these areas, significant improvements have been made.

The last step, and this is a very personal point for me, is the Cairo summit which is scheduled for later this fall. I think it's extremely important if everyone in this council, the government and the media make sure that we let the world know that Egypt has opened its doors for business. I want to emphasise this.

Do you feel you are well-informed about economic development and reforms in Egypt? The Egyptian market has the potential of being very robust. It's made up of 60 million people and that, in itself, is something that may not always be understood. When I took on this assignment [in the

President's Council], I understood and appreciated the importance of Egypt, and I continue to understand its strategic importance. From this perspective, my view, which from the start was very positive, has not changed.

But one of the things I did not appreciate, as much as I do now, is the work force available... and this simply illustrates how important it is for Egypt to advertise its capabilities. In my particular industry, software engineering, having the technical and labour force capabilities is very important. In this regard, I learned how Egypt can contribute to the world of high-tech.

Are you up-to-date on the latest developments? I have a global responsibility, so I try to keep up with every market around the world. I have a staff that keeps me abreast with what's going on, so I do believe I have a reasonable grasp of what's going on in Egypt. I should also point out that the majority of the American side



James Brewington

[of the council] also do because so many of them have businesses in Egypt. You simply have to be aware of what's going on, and I think we have a very good view of what's going on in Egypt. But, could we know more? Absolutely.

What more can the council do? One of the things that I am concerned about is that we need to understand how Egypt can have an impact on the region as a whole. I have high hopes that at one point

this will also become part of the council's mission. Right now we tend to look more at how we can improve the situation in Egypt, but we [should] think of industry in Egypt, and how that industry can flourish and export goods to other parts of the region.

As I look towards the future, I think Egypt can be a springboard which businesses that invest in Egypt can use to cross over into neighbouring Middle Eastern countries, as well as those in eastern Europe and Africa.

Has the council lived up to your expectations?

As I look back, I think the council has realised some tremendous accomplishments. I approached the job with some wild expectations, but that's how I approach every job. Frankly, from my perspective, we've accomplished a lot, but we still have a long way to go. Nonetheless, I'm proud of what we've done.

James Brewington, chairman of the American side of the President's Council.

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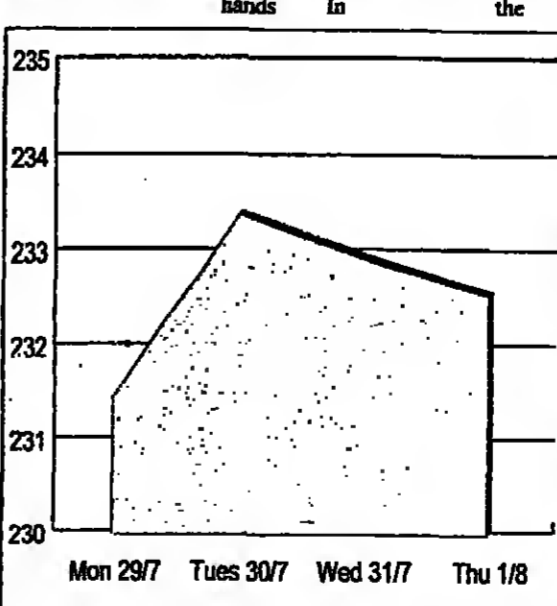
### Market report

#### Portland Cement gains

THE GENERAL Market Index gained 7.66 points for the week ending 1 August, and closed at 232.57 points, as more than 2.2 million shares, valued at LE122.5 million, changed hands.

The index for the manufacturing sector increased by 10.85 points to close at 301.02, mainly as a result of an increase in the value of the Patino and Chemical Industries Company's shares. The stock increased by LE55 to close at LE730. Shares of the Alexandria Portland Cement Company also experienced a marked increase in value, gaining LE21 to level off at LE407 by the end of the week. Fate was smiling on the Egyptian Financial and Industrial Company, whose shares gained LE12.4 to close at LE56. However, seven other manufacturing sector companies witnessed a decrease in their share

values. Topping the list is the Egyptian International Pharmaceuticals Industries Company, whose shares fell in value by LE10 to level off at LE105.



also did well, increasing in value by LE25 to close at LE445. In all, the shares of 37 companies increased, 16 decreased and 20 remained unchanged.

Edited by Ghada Ragab

### Farm aid

THE UNITED States Agency for International Development (USAID) recently released a \$34 million grant to the Egyptian government, representing the seventh disbursement of funds under the Agricultural Production and Credit (APC) Programme.

The programme, launched a decade ago, aims to deregulate the agricultural sector and allow farmers greater flexibility in making production decisions. The APC also seeks to liberalise the market for agricultural inputs and outputs and facilitate farmers' access to financial services.

[The US Ambassador to Egypt Edward Walker, announcing the release of the funds, said, "We are pleased to be a part of this period in Egypt's history when new horizons for private sector participation are opening up in the economy. These changes will strengthen the economy and make Egypt a stronger nation as well."

The seventh disbursement marks the US's stamp of approval for Egypt's agricultural reform policies.

# Unveiling Muslim America

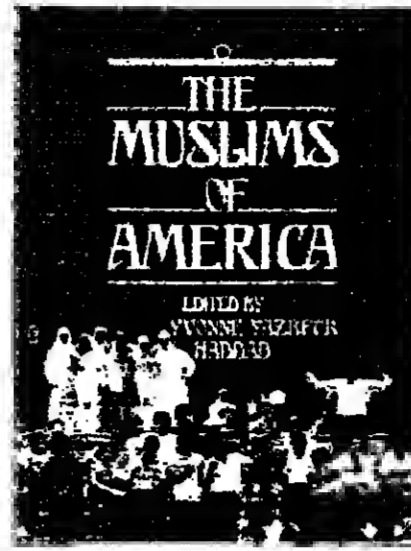
For three decades, Professor Yvonne Yazbek Haddad has been lecturing on what she calls "the true picture of Islam". At Georgetown University's Cultural Centre in Washington DC, Haddad teaches her students that "Islam is not an 'out-there' religion and that Muslims are not a sleazy bunch of Arabs, but an integral part of American society".

Haddad, 62, specialises in Islam in the 20th century, Qur'anic exegesis, Christian-Muslim relations and Muslims in North America. After graduating in 1958 from the Beirut College for Women

in Lebanon, she pursued her post-graduate studies at Boston University.

Among her publications are *Christian-Muslim Encounters; Muslim Communities in North America; Muslims in America; The Contemporary Islamic Revival; Women, Religion and Social Change; The Islamic Impact; and Islamic Values in the United States*.

Although she has received several death threats, she maintains that "when you touch a nerve, you know you are right". Haddad spoke to Omayma Abdel-Latif during a recent visit to Cairo



"The growing Muslim community during the past three decades in the US has heightened public awareness of the Muslim presence. Americans have come to know that Muslims could be their neighbours, that they are normal people who have no horns or tails on them," Professor Yvonne Haddad said.

However, and despite the fact that the Muslim community has created a distinctive identity for itself, Haddad believes that talk of a unified Muslim lobby is still premature, even in an election year. "There is not one cohesive Muslim lobby, but there are several active political groups spread out in different parts of the US," said Haddad. "Generally speaking, Muslims want nothing to do with politics. I think part of it is because they are immigrants and their experience is that playing with politics is dangerous. The general attitude of immigrants is to keep the lowest profile possible."

The Los Angeles Islamic Centre of Southern California, however, enjoys a major political role. These are also political action groups in Washington DC, including the American Muslim Council and the United Muslims of America. "These groups are trying to encourage Muslims in America to take part of the system, to register to vote and to run for office," Haddad said. The main challenge facing Muslims is that their political groups are not as organised as other political groups. "In the US when you create a lobby you have to have money, and they do not have the experience in effectively utilising funds," she explained.

Success stories are to be seen in the election of some Arab Americans to the federal government's top positions. For example, Spencer Abraham, who is of Lebanese origin, represents the state of Michigan in the Senate. He is active on Palestinian issues and supports the Arab community's agenda. There are also several Muslim judges from African-American and Lebanese backgrounds. Yet Muslims are still viewed as a marginal interest group and their importance has been overshadowed by America's tenuous relationships with Middle Eastern countries.

Items the whole all American Muslims include the issue of Jerusalem, the Muslim holocaust in

Bosnia and, of course, the Palestinian cause. But how will this affect their voting in this year's presidential elections?

Arab Americans may support some of Clinton's domestic agenda, but the American policy towards Israel is not supported either by Christian Arabs, who number around two million in the US, or by the Muslim community.

"At one time the majority were hoping that Dole would be a little more positive about Arab issues because Clinton was perceived as the one who supports Israel," Haddad said. "But Dole was the one who initiated the bid to move the American Embassy to Jerusalem and now the Muslim community is reassessing their support for him. The issue of Jerusalem is very important to both Arab and Muslim communities in the US and they think Dole is flirting with Likud since Clinton supports Labour."

Muslims seem to have successfully lobbied American churches. According to Haddad, a long-time advocate of Islamic-Christian dialogue in the US, ongoing talks between the two communities are bearing fruit.

"The National Council of Churches is beginning to organise a new movement for Jerusalem in the US. It involves not only the Arab Christian churches, but American churches lobbying for a part of Jerusalem to be reserved for the Palestinians. The Council of Churches is supporting Muslims in their rejection of Israel's exclusive rights in the city, and they are totally against the Israeli policy which states that neither Muslims nor Christians have a place in the Holy City," Haddad said.

"The churches are also carrying out an important role in defending the image of Islam. For example, Christian organisations in Washington DC have issued a statement saying the American Muslim organisations represent the Muslims of America who work for peace, social integration and for a better community," she added.

But despite a recent decline in anti-Muslim rhetoric on the part of various churches and despite Christian efforts to create a better image of Islam in the US, Islam is still portrayed as the "green menace", threatening Western, particularly Amer-

ican, interests. Haddad believes that some people are earning a living out of propagating such false notions.

"Israel once sold itself to the US as the keeper of democracy against the threat of communism. But since communism is dead, Israel needs to sell itself as the defender against a new threat, and this is Islam," Haddad said.

"The Zionist lobby dictates that Islam is the enemy. We repeatedly see Israeli leaders come to the US and tell American-Jewish youth that Islam is the enemy. Another group that profits from a similar mentality are people whose job is to combat ideological threats to American interests, whether they be people in US government, researchers in think-tanks or professors," she claimed.

"All these experts we see on television selling their expertise on terrorism — without having ever set foot in an Islamic country — would lose their jobs if there was no so-called threat, so they have to create one," she went on. "These people profit from the fear of Islam. We have even seen Arab heads of states coming to the US and saying Islam is a threat because they want to get American support against the opposition movements in their countries."

But the dominant portrayal of Islam in the US is fortunately not as the "green menace". As Haddad explains, some Americans are very aware that there is a campaign of some sort going on against Islam. Although the general public is ignorant about Islam, it is not as afraid of Islam as it was of communism.

Recently accusations were levelled at some Islamic organisations in the US claiming that they were channelling funds to "terrorist groups" like Hamas and Hezbollah in the Middle East. Haddad said that the issue was blown out of proportion at the time. "While it is true that some mosques in the US send money to Palestinian organisations in Gaza and the West Bank for social welfare purposes, this is a very insignificant amount of money compared to the money going to Palestinian schools and hospitals from other sources," she said.

Recently, the US passed a law restricting money being sent to any group outside the US. According

to Haddad, the law is not meant to offend Muslims. "The Irish send money and so do Jewish organisations like the Jewish Defence League and Gush Amonim, so it does not target the Muslim community alone."

The Nation of Islam has made headlines around the world in recent months with such high-profile events as the Million Man March. Haddad describes it as "a very controversial organisation", saying its anti-Semitic tag stops anybody else from wanting to cooperate with it. Even worse, she went on, the Anti-Defamation League has produced four different documents attacking the Nation of Islam, which means the organisation's leader, Louis Farrakhan, has a problem achieving a national basis of support.

But what Farrakhan has done in the African-American community is very important because he works with the African-American underclass, Haddad believes. The civil rights movement integrated a large number of highly educated African-Americans into the political and social leadership of the US. "They were co-opted into the white American system and the African Americans were left leaderless. Farrakhan came out as the only leader for the underclass, the ones that are uneducated and unemployable and he provides a very important way of saving those people," she said.

"The Nation of Islam managed to keep many black areas free of drugs, prostitution and guns, but Farrakhan lost his contract with the government and he is in a tough situation whereby he cannot provide his followers with employment. The organisation is very small with only 10,000 followers. The Muslim community has been on record saying Farrakhan is not a Muslim and there has been a great number of statements via e-mail saying this as well. They disassociated themselves from what he preaches," Haddad explained.

Some recent studies have shown that Americans are developing greater interest in Islam. Hillary Clinton has even expressed a personal wish to study the religion on more than one occasion. Haddad says that the number of American students who join classes on Islam has increased re-

markably. While in the 1950s there were only two places in the whole of the US offering Islamic studies, the situation has changed to suit the new political role of the US in the Middle East.

"When the US established itself as a power in the Middle East, a centre at the University of Michigan was set up for Middle Eastern studies, with one course on Islam. Currently, there is a growing number of universities with respected Islamic studies programmes. Professorial posts are mostly occupied by Sunni Muslims — a significant development because now you have Muslims who are teaching Islam. There is a growing number of Americans interested in studying Islam. This includes journalists," Haddad said.

During the last six years, Haddad believes, there have been some very thoughtful writings on Islam as an American religion. "Since there are so many Muslims in the US, we get more in-depth coverage on Islamic occasions. It is part of integrating Muslims into American life," she said. This is part of the reason why Haddad is optimistic about the future of Islam as a religion in the United States. There are several ideas about how Islam is going to function in the US. One of them is propagated by groups like Al-Salafiya, whose followers think that Muslims should be an isolated community with no relations with the outside world except to recruit converts. In an open society like America, says Haddad, such a strategy is doomed to failure.

"It is up to Muslims to decide how they will deal with the outside world. Muslims should feel confident about themselves because Islam is the fastest growing religion in the US," she said. A lot of conversions are taking place in university campuses, where you have predominantly Christian women converting to Islam, and in prisons, where many African Americans and now some Latinos are also converting.

In Haddad's view, the outlook for Islam in the US is by no means gloomy. "The second generation is going to be Americans who follow the religion but not the culture," she said. "They will understand America and speak its language and negotiate their way within American society."

## Upsurge in Indonesian wood exports

INDONESIA came as the second largest exporter of wood worldwide after Brazil, having held a top position in the global market from 1990-1996. The Indonesian Press Agency quoted an Indonesian official as saying that Indonesia exported 8,506 metres of wood in 1990, with a value of \$73.71bn in comparison with only \$90bn in 1996.

Wood exports are the main source of foreign currency after petroleum. Malaysia is the toughest competitor for Indonesian timber exports.

## MONEY & BUSINESS



## Training course on managing portfolios

THE DECISION-Making Centre is organising a training seminar on portfolio management on 13 August 1996.

The course will provide information on the selection of stocks and bonds, as well understanding mutual funds' activities and portfolio management.

Speaking at the seminar will be Professor Mamdouh El-Khodiri, economics expert, Mamdouh El-Wail, economic reporter for Al-Ahram and Professor Saad Abdel-Latif from the Faculty of Commerce, Cairo University.

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## NBE's leading role in boosting small-scale enterprises

THE NATIONAL Bank of Egypt (NBE) has carved a pivotal role in enhancing the economic reform policy and mitigating its negative social repercussions. To this end, NBE tailored an integrated programme for financing small-scale industries and enterprises.

It is noteworthy that the bank has — since the mid-sixties — embarked upon financing small-scale productive enterprises through soft loans. In October 1990, NBE allocated a tranche of LE25mn (which was increased to LE315mn in April 1996) to expand the scope of activities to cover 23,000 tradesmen.

As an active credit channel, NBE has effectively participated in the Social Fund for Development's (SFD) programme to encourage young graduates and small entrepreneurs.

In May 1993, the bank signed six contracts with the SFD amounting to LE250mn, to be channelled to such entrepreneurs at concessionary terms.

In April 1996, 13,000 customers benefited from such loans (including 5,840 existing projects and 7,613 new ones). Under the above-mentioned facilities, NBE contributed to creating job opportunities for young graduates through movable markets.

The bank has also concluded with the Ministry of Trade and the SFD, an LE40mn contract to be implemented in four successive stages. The contract provides for es-

tablishing 2,000 marketing and service projects creating 4,000 and 2,000 permanent and temporary job opportunities respectively. In fact, the bank has already financed 161 projects amounting to LE4mn as of April 1996.

Furthermore, NBE has concerted, in cooperation with the Ministry of Industry and the Union of Industries, a special system for small and medium-scale industries whose total cost ranges from LE500,000 to LE1mn each, including lands and premises. The said system gives priority to labour-intensive industries and projects established in Upper Egypt.

During the first quarter of 1996, NBE provided 51 per cent of the LE22mn in guarantees extended by the Credit Guarantee Company for Small Scale Enterprises. This raises NBE's share of total banking credits guaranteed by the company, since its operation on 1 January 1991 to 31 January 1996, to LE271mn, representing 51.5 per cent of the company's activities in the field of small and medium scale enterprises. In addition, a sum of LE84mn was pumped to the medical programme for physicians, pharmacists and other medical enterprises, accounting for 70 per cent of the company's activities in the said field.

In fact, NBE's meticulous efforts in this field aim at underpinning small-scale projects; the cornerstone of the economic reform programme, and fanning the flames of the development process in Egypt, given its position on top of the Egyptian banking system.

## International Frankfurt Autumn Fair

WITH A new name, and, for the first time, over 5,100 exhibitors as well as an expected total of more than 100,000 visitors from all over the world, Tendence — the International Frankfurt Autumn Fair — from 24 to 28 August 1996, is the obligatory event for the consumer goods sector. It continues the tradition of the International Autumn Fair with a wide variety of high-grade consumer goods that, for 1996, will be bundled together in three thematic groups: table decoration and kitchen, domus and lumina and gifts. The approximately 276,000 square metres of exhibition space at the Frankfurt Fair and Exhibition Centre are fully booked.

The table decoration and kitchen exhibit has the largest proportion of international exhibitors of all consumer-goods fairs in Frankfurt. This is particularly true of the set table trade fair where over two-thirds of the more than 600 exhibitors come from outside Germany. At this trade fair, the focus is on glass, porcelain, silverware, cutlery and pewter.

The majority of exhibitors — about 60 per cent — also come from abroad in the kitchen and housewares exhibit, displaying cutting tools and cutlery, serving utensils, cooking utensils, kitchen equipment and plastics products. By way of contrast, the complete range of tableware products offered

by around 260 dealers and importers make the table decor and accessories exhibit a magnet for the international market. At the forthcoming Tendence, the table decoration and kitchen exhibit will include, for the first time, a gourmet shop offering tea and coffee, selected alcoholic beverages, pasta, fine oils and vinegar.

The domus and lumina exhibit brings together the interior design and furnishing exhibits of the former Autumn Fair and Thema Domus fair. The product spectrum encompasses furniture, home accessories including home textiles, pictures, frames and domestic lighting.

Lumina, the newest exhibit for decorative light, concentrates on domestic lighting, split between avant-garde and classic styles. Also new is the country home exhibit, featuring nearly 180 companies focusing on garden furniture, terra-cotta and other appropriate accessories.

With these and other exhibits, it is expected that Tendence 1996 will be the largest and most successful fair of its kind.



Peter Goepsfrich

## Business news

### Quality control

MAMDOUH El-Beltagui, minister of tourism, assigned the General Department for Hotel Affairs at the Ministry of Tourism to periodically check the services provided for tourists in all Egyptian hotels to see if these services are up to international standards.

El-Beltagui, who sent a letter to the Egyptian Hotels' Chamber of Commerce, indicated the ministry's readiness to provide all possible support to implement training programmes. The tourism boom which Egypt is currently witnessing, he said, is the result of the marketing and promotions that the ministry has been implementing since 1994.

### Hungarian exhibition

MARKING the 10th anniversary of the Republic of Hungary's National Day, an international fair will be held in Budapest from 20-29 September.

Many countries from all over the world are expected to take part in this event, among which are Egyptian companies which will display their products in the Egyptian pavilion. Among the products that will be on display are textiles, ready-made clothes, foodstuffs, cigarettes, candy, curtains, ceramic tiles, arabesque furniture, cosmetics and chemical products.

## Al-Ahram Weekly

### Prognosis negative

For those unsure of the best way to completely derail an already stalled peace process, ask Benjamin Netanyahu. Despite repeated requests by key players in the peace process, the Israeli prime minister seems intent on following through with the very policies that got him elected but are virtually guaranteed to undermine every gain achieved in the Madrid accords. He has yet to re-deploy Israeli troops stationed in Hebron, find time to meet with Arafat, agree to sit down for the continuation of the stalled final status negotiations, or for that matter, make one single concession on any of the disputed issues. But, just in case there is any room for doubt about his intentions, he has lifted the freeze on the expansion of existing Jewish settlements. Could this step be construed as anything less than a blatant attempt to reverse a policy that had, for four years, thwarted Israel's expansionist aspirations?

Netanyahu, however, would have the world believe that he is committed to peace. To drive this point home, he extended to Syria a token of his good will, urging Arafat to resume talks on "all outstanding matters". The precondition for these talks, he stated, was a "Lebanon-first" option.

Even more perplexing is the fact that while he is determined to ensure Israel's security, believing that should this be realised, peace will naturally follow, Netanyahu has laid out one of the strongest foundations for escalating tensions between Israelis and Palestinians. Does he really believe that if settlements are expanded, the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza will welcome them with open arms? Tensions are high, the stage is set for a conflict and all Netanyahu has succeeded in doing is lighting the fuse.

On its part, the Arab world has given Netanyahu ample time to prove that he is truly committed to peace. And yet, he has taken no steps, save for some meaningless soundbites, to prove wrong the morose prediction that peace will fall victim to the rapacious whims of a Jewish extremist minority.

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# Terrorism and democracy

Bill Clinton's sanctions bill against Iran and Libya, signed last Monday, highlights a growing rift, worldwide and in the Middle East, over how to combat terrorism, Mohamed Sid-Ahmed comments

The use of sanctions against countries suspected of backing terrorism is a controversial and potentially divisive issue that has come in for a great deal of attention in recent days. At the joint press conference they held in Washington last week, presidents Mubarak and Clinton voiced disparate views on how best to deal with the problem of rising terrorism. While the US president reiterated his view that sanctions should be imposed against countries known to sponsor terrorism, the Egyptian president differed with his host in that he believes only groups directly responsible for terrorist acts in any given state should be punished, warning that imposing sanctions against an entire people could be counterproductive.

President Mubarak's view is shared by European leaders, whose differences with the US on this issue were highlighted at the G-7 meeting held in Paris last week to agree on a package of counter-terrorism measures. European foreign ministers participating in the meeting came out strongly against Washington's practice of unilaterally singling out and penalising certain states like Iran, Iraq, Libya and Sudan as 'sponsors' of terrorism without conclusive evidence to back the charge. They also pointed to the lack of consistency in Washington's policies as proof of its intention to promote a unipolar world order under its leadership. For example, although the US continues to accuse Syria of sheltering terrorists, it has not included Syria among the countries which are to be isolated, because dealing with Damascus is necessary for the success of the US-brokered Middle East peace process.

While President Mubarak's stand on the issue is closer to that of the European capitals, including Moscow, President Clinton's stand is

closer to that of Israel's new prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. In his address to Congress some two weeks before Mubarak's visit to Washington, Netanyahu urged the international community to "reinvent its efforts to isolate Iran and Iraq and prevent them from acquiring nuclear capability", which could, in his words, "bring catastrophic consequences not only for Israel but not only for the Middle East but for all of mankind." Calling for a "united front" by the international community, led by the United States, to stop "the nuclearisation of terrorist states", he said that "Israel's negotiating partners, and indeed all the regimes of the region, must make a choice" between either following "the option of terror as an instrument of diplomacy or following the option of peace. They cannot have both."

Netanyahu's perceptions of the political map in the Middle East differ significantly from those of his predecessor, more generally, from the stand of the previous Israeli government, a stand that was incidentally also strongly supported by Clinton. Peres' vision of a Middle East at peace was based on the creation of a Middle East market that would eventually extend to include all states in the region. He did not proceed from the prior assumption that given states were to be excluded, believing that market mechanisms and economic incentives would gradually dissipate the acuteness of the conflict and contain terrorism. For Netanyahu, the focus should be on fighting terrorism and the states backing it. As he sees it, only democratic states are entitled to membership in the 'new world order', while states not subscribing to the rules of (Western) democracy should be ostracised as "terrorist".

Taking this argument to its logical conclusion,

Netanyahu distinguishes between two types of peace: one between democratic states based on parity, the other on deterrence, which in his view is the only version that can apply in the Middle East between "democratic" Israel and its non-democratic Arab neighbours. Because peace is seen by Netanyahu as no more than a mechanism by which Israel's Arab environment can be neutralised as a source of terrorism, the use of military dissuasion and/or economic sanctions against maverick Arab regimes is completely justified.

In a way, Netanyahu's logic is not absolutely incompatible with that of the 'new world order', which claims to have overcome bipolarity when in fact it has not. Even if bipolarity is no longer in the form of an East-West dichotomy, it is still present in the North-South divide which is now assumed, at least as far as Netanyahu is concerned, to take the form of a democracy/terrorism duality as well. Actually, the scope of the 'new world order' is limited both horizontally and vertically, encompassing neither the whole surface of the globe nor reaching into each society in depth. For example, market mechanisms are based on the free exchange of commodities and the free movement of persons. But only a privileged minority has benefited from privatisation in a cruelly competitive world, while the poor are growing poorer, even in America, where Democratic President Bill Clinton has just signed a bill ending a 6 decades-old federal commitment to help the needy.

The domain of diplomacy, which strives to resolve conflicts by peaceful means, is only one aspect of the present world structure. Other less visible aspects operate in the opposite direction. To cite just a few: drugs, organised crime, money laundering, and arms trade, including trade

in prohibited weapons of mass destruction. All states are involved to one extent or another in practices living outside the legitimacy of world order. Efforts to fight terrorism today are based on the idea of making a clear distinction between acts carried out within this legitimacy and acts lying outside it. The package of 25 counterterrorism measures agreed in the G-7 Paris meeting focused on such practical aspects as detecting car-bombs before they go off, developing techniques to identify the provenance of explosives, promoting legislation on terrorism, stepping up the fight against forged identity papers, preventing on the Internet, changing information on the Internet, intensifying the pooling of information on terrorist activities between states, revising laws on political asylum, etc.

But as long as the war against terrorism remains focused exclusively on controlling its manifestations, as long as no serious effort is made to address its underlying causes, the disease will continue to spread. Indeed, it now seems very much as though the new world order's single-minded drive for privatisation, often at the expense of social welfare, has created a hospitable climate for the growth of the phenomenon.

More important for the Arab world is to understand where President Clinton stands in these fundamental problems. Can his adoption of views identical to those of Netanyahu on terrorism be made compatible with the views he expressed to President Mubarak during the latter's recent visit to Washington? And how can this be reconciled with his announcement that his views on how to achieve peace in the Middle East have not changed with the change of government in Israel?

## Horizons of the global village

Purchasing Western technology is no solution to the Arabs' predicament, writes Sayed El-Bahrawi

In the past few years, Arab intellectuals have begun to fear that their technological inferiority will relegate the Arabs to the periphery of the international relations network which constitutes the new world order. Survival, as they see it, dictates an increasingly rapid transfer of technology and an enormous boost in technological progress.

The flaw of the proposed solution, as I will explain further on, lies in the way the problem was originally posed — as though the new world order was synonymous with the revolution in information technology. But this is not the case at all.

The revolution in information technology is the natural outcome of accumulated scientific, scholastic and technological progress brought on by the industrial revolution over 200 years ago. This progress catalysed the transition of the societies that produced it to the post-modernist era. This is one of the factors that facilitated the globalisation of international relations as expressed by the new world order.

The revolution in information technology thus preceded the new world order, which, at any rate, is still in a state of flux, and which may yet acquire unforeseen dimensions. Simultaneously, information technology has become the primary mechanism for managing the dynamics of the new world order, whatever form it assumes. There is therefore an inherent contradiction between the concept of the new world order, on one hand, and the unlimited potential of the revolution in information technology, on the other.

Knowledge and science can transcend their immediate purpose, thus becoming means of achieving a broader benefit than that envisioned by their direct producers. Yet the current concept of international relations limits scientific and technological production to the achievement of specific interests,

i.e. the interests of the producers — who are, in the final analysis, the international capitalist centre and its immediate peripheries. In other words, the revolution in information technology becomes a tool for global hegemony within the new world order, not only over the formally colonised countries, but over the entire globe.

The expansion of communications networks, which carry the voice of the centre to all the peripheries, contribute to this hegemony and allow the cultural specificity of weaker parties to be undermined further. This constitutes a breach of one of the basic human rights: the right to maintain one's distinct identity in every aspect of one's interaction with others, the world and even with oneself. If the centre has the exclusive power to infuse the transmission of information with its own values, models and aesthetic forms, this inhibits the real communication needs of others, falsifying their consciousness and imposing upon them an alien world view. This monopoly has a grave political and economic impact; it also has psychological consequences, the least of which are alienation, loss of identity, and an aggravated sense of inferiority. The introduction of the satellite dishes into the Egyptian countryside may serve to exemplify the impact of this monopoly on the receiving countries.

So far only two courses have been open to countries on the periphery. The first, which is to ban the use of satellite dishes, is at best a temporary stopgap. The second is to opt for full integration into the system. This is the course adopted by the Egyptian government: more TV channels, more transmission hours and the quest for an Egyptian-owned satellite.

On the surface, it would appear that this endeavour represents an attempt to counter foreign influences by offering Egyptian-produced pro-

gramming as an alternative. In reality, however, this endeavour only furthers assimilation, as the programmes produced are not technically Egyptian. Much of this material is inspired by Western models and, unfortunately, is often based on the worst material available. Even authentically Egyptian material is often censored. Under such constraints, this material can hardly satisfy the deeper cultural needs of the Egyptian people and offer an appealing alternative to imported products.

Furthermore, much of Egyptian television programming promotes the values of Western capitalist civilization, encouraging conspicuous consumption in a society where sixty per cent of people live under the poverty line.

This course, however, is the logical extension of the line advocated by Arab intellectuals since the turn of the century: the simultaneous adoption of modern technology and preservation of Eastern ethics. This is an instrumental solution that deals with Western civilization in a pragmatic and eclectic fashion. It does not acknowledge the integral relationship between technology and the society that produces it. It also fails to take into account the human dimensions inherent in the production of technology and renders us incapable of separating the political and ideological elements from purely scientific material. We transfer technology lock, stock and barrel, yet forget the unfortunate fact that we do not really know how to use it, since we never produced it in the first place.

If we do not confront this eclectic head-on, we risk greater deterioration, rather than the prosperity predicted by those intellectuals advocating integration into the new world order. If we aspire to any weight and influence in the international arena, we must fulfil our-

selves through our distinct identity, thus enriching our own society and in turn enriching world culture, which can only be universal if it is fed by a variety of cultural specificities. Without diversity of cultural specificities, there can be no real universal culture in science, art, the humanities and even in technology.

For us to make our contribution, we must first take a good look at ourselves and become truly cognisant of the fact that we have a right to life because we are complete human beings, with no inherent deficiencies. We are fully capable of creative endeavour and we must eliminate all obstacles that impede our creativity. Nor are others in any way inherently better than us. They have learned from us in the past and continue to do so. What they produce may benefit us; on the other hand, it might not. But we certainly do not need them to tell us what we need. This we must do for ourselves. Once we have determined our needs, we can channel our creative efforts toward fulfilling them. Here, we can engage Western science, learn from it and develop upon it, as active and innovative participants, not as passive imitators.

This means that we must develop ourselves academically and scientifically in order to render ourselves capable of comprehending and contributing to scientific and technological production. It also means that we must subject ourselves to a sincere and profound examination in order to determine our true needs, so that these may be reflected in our scientific and technological production, in the media, and in education. Only then will we truly become part of the new world order; only then will we be capable of helping it become more humane, just and universal.

The writer is professor of Arabic literature, Cairo University.

## A second honeymoon?

By Naguib Mahfouz

Egyptian-US relations have passed through a great many stages since 1952. After the revolution there was a honeymoon period which lasted until the US withdrew the offer to help finance the High Dam. Certainly by 1956 it had become apparent that the US was attempting merely to fill the vacuum it perceived having been left by the departure of the British, and so relations entered a uneasy phase. American insistence that France and Britain withdraw from Suez could well have led to a new start in relations, though as things turned out the American gesture was something of a non-offer.

Relations reached their lowest point with the war of 1967 with President Johnson's flagrant biased support for Israel. This continued until President Sadat turned relations around in the wake of the October War. Suddenly there was a diplomatic volte face.

The pendulum described an enormous arc. Relations, at their worst during the presidency of General Abdel-Nasser, were at their warmest during the presidency of Anwar El-Sadat. During President Mubarak's term of office such fluctuations appear to have stabilised, and now this seems to be emerging — witness Mubarak's recent visit to the US, perhaps his most successful to date — a realistic assessment of mutual interests, and a greater understanding of perceived differences.

Based on an interview by Mohamed Sawaby.

### The Press This Week

**Al-Ahram:** "In Washington President Mubarak skillfully brought about a change in the US position — which appeared to be supportive of the new Israeli position — to return it to being an active and trustworthy mediator in the peace process with a strong determination to push it forward and rescue it from collapse." (Editorial, 3 August)

**Al-Mussawwar:** "The internal Egyptian position added more weight to President Mubarak's visit to the US and its impact both on the administration and Congress — a position strengthened by the successes in containing terrorism and in moving forward on economic reform with all its risks and its attendant problems in a way that made Egypt one of the best venues for investment." (Makram Mohamed Ahmed, 2 August)

**Al-Ahram:** "In his recent visit to the US, President Mubarak maintained the equation of holding on to the relationship with Washington while holding on to our sovereignty. We do not shut the door before such relations but Washington should know that there is a great difference between a relationship between equals and one based on hegemony and coercion." (Mustafa Bakri, 3 August)

**Al-Akhbar:** "The fruits of the successful visit of President Mubarak to the US are gradually being felt. The day before yesterday a final draft agreement between Egypt and the IMF was announced — a big success for Egypt, particularly as it did not have to make concessions... The importance of the agreement lies in its being an incentive to give a push to economic reform as it moves forwards towards privatisation." (Editorial, 5 August)

**October:** "The aim of Mubarak's visit to the US was to clarify the Egyptian and Arab positions and to persuade the American administration to assume its responsibilities as a partner in the peace process... It was also aimed at restoring US-Egyptian relations within a correct framework — friendship based on equality and mutual interests, allowing for dialogue and differences, respecting the freedom, independence of both sides and upholding agreements and commitments in words and deeds." (Ragab El-Banna, 4 August)

### Mubarak in the US

**Al-Arabia:** "The success of President Mubarak's visit means that a clear warning has reached the Americans, saying that their blind bias (for Israel) will cause an explosion in the region. The first victims of that bias will be US interests in the region. Arab weakness and the present balance of power will not remain forever — the Arabs will never become a nation of Red Indians." (Galal Aref, 5 August)

**Al-Akhbar:** "Arab media focused on the absolute clarity with which President Mubarak dealt with the US administration during his visit... He strongly warned the US of the inherent dangers of impeding or postponing the peace process by linking it to the recent escalation of terrorism in the region." (Editorial, 4 August)

**Al-Gomhuriya:** "It is only natural that some will try to drive a wedge into Egyptian-American relations which have never been as developed and flourishing as they are today. Many oppose what is going on because it runs contrary to their interests. Israel tops the list. Having depended on the US since its creation, Israel is now furious that someone else should appear on the American stage to rival it with dignity and respect." (Samir Ragab, 5 August)

**Al-Ahram:** "The Israeli government has lifted the restrictions imposed on expanding Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza... This decision will undoubtedly drive new Palestinian factions to return to resistance operations against the occupying power... and could lead to a new phase of violence which would undermine Netanyahu's 'peace for security' formula: the Israeli state and people will have no security. So what is it exactly does the Israeli government want?" (Editorial, 4 August)

**Al-Wafd:** "The policy of settlement building in the Occupied Territories can destroy peace totally. The land owners will not permit these expansionist moves... The Palestinians will not allow Israel to leave something behind in every city and every village — for each settlement means a land mine ready to explode. Does Israel really realise the dangers of that decision?" (Abbas El-Tarabli, 4 August)

compiled by Hala Saqr



What are the key elements of Anwar Mubarak's face? Well, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, it is vital that he be able to listen and where necessary, to lend a sympathetic ear. And so he looked first on his ears, before moving to the eyebrows, arched in thought, betraying wit and security in equal measure. The eyes are piercing, for they must predict the repercussions of every event after event. Then there is the nose, sharp and well-defined, and of course the lips, on which, always, there plays a diplomatic smile. Yet despite the fluidity of individual features the secret of capturing the image of Anwar Mubarak is to fit these disparate elements into an expression of certainty.

## Close up

Salama A. Salama

### The flames of hate

Just as Washington has placed American forces in the Gulf on maximum alert in response to terrorist threats, threats that have already materialised in a number of attacks both at home and abroad, so more and more information is coming to light regarding the proliferation of terrorist groups in the US that appear, like an unstoppable epidemic, to be infecting city after city and state after state.

Yet according to official sources the general public is largely unaware of the gravity of the situation, and has yet to take on board the seriousness of the phenomenon. Up to 13 states are rife with armed militias, members of various right wing factions which run their own training camps and which attract thousands of adherents, armed to the teeth with sophisticated weaponry and state of the art arsenals of munitions and explosives.

These militias operate quite freely, engaging in acts that are variously described as being racist or anti-Semitic. They vociferously call for white supremacy in a society where the proportion of blacks is increasing rapidly. These neo-Nazi militias follow a creed that originated in pre-war Germany, and regard any kind of federal intervention in their lives whatever form it takes. They do not want to pay taxes, be subjected to business laws or any other national legislation which proscribes their anti-social activities.

It appears strange then, given official concern about public indifference towards the activities of such groups, that the American government should be looking to solve the mystery of the recent terrorist attacks in Atlanta and against the TWA plane, in Libya and Iran. At times, indeed, the US government seems intent on forgetting that the roots of terrorism, and the advanced technology to which terrorists have increasing access, are products of its own society. The frustrations of poor, white Americans, resentful of more recent immigrants to the US who have quickly gained a foothold on the socio-economic, have provided a fertile breeding ground for extremists.

It is important, then, to state clearly that any suggestion that terrorism originates abroad, and only abroad, is in effect an attempt to whitewash and oversimplify a very complex reality.

America's military incursions in many areas of conflict around the world — Haiti, Somalia, Korea, the Gulf, Iraq, the Balkans and elsewhere — are all potential tinder-boxes. They are all capable of producing the kind of hatred and anger that finds its expression in acts of terrorist violence. America is, after all, home to a great many people of Haitian, Somali, Korean, Iraqi, Balkan and Gulf extraction. Indeed, it was recently disclosed that the son of the Somali leader Farah Aidid, who mailed the American forces so badly, is a member of a division of the US Marine Corps which recently served in Somalia.

Given the difficulties in differentiating between terrorism financed domestically, and terrorism financed from abroad, it becomes very dangerous to use terrorism as an excuse to attack foreign states. European states, for instance, along with Japan, have been particularly suspicious of US motives, suspecting that the real target of their attacks are the operations of European oil companies in both Libya and Iran.

France, itself vulnerable to domestic terrorism, shaken by the deteriorating situation in Algeria, has come out particularly strongly against the US policy of imposing economic sanctions on the merest suspicion of involvement in terrorism. Such a policy, the French argue, succeeds only in encouraging extremism and heightening tensions.

Concilio?



# New causes for confidence

The future of the region may often seem uncertain, writes **Ahmed Fakhr**. But optimism is hardly a pipe dream

Every new day brings a number of challenges and opportunities, aspirations and difficulties. It also brings a large measure of uncertainty. Minimising this uncertainty, to the extent needed and possible, is based on the implementation of agreements previously concluded. The thorough implementation of previous agreements and the minimisation of uncertainty are both important factors in multilateral relations. President Mubarak's visit to the US last week went a long way towards cementing multilateral agreements previously reached after long negotiation, and thus towards minimising uncertainty. In this respect, it is possible to say that his visit and its consequences are causes for optimism, and hope that a bright new day will soon dawn.

During the president's visit, and during meetings with high-ranking officials in the US administration, leaders of both the House and Senate, Jewish-American organisations and the media, the president placed great emphasis on three main issues: the Middle East peace process, Egyptian-American bilateral relations and international terrorism.

A new day will dawn on the peace process, when the US will act on the basis of a new understanding: to wit, that the last Arab summit, held in Cairo in June, made the condition of permanent peace with Israel a strategic option for the Arabs. This agreement marked a turning-point in the history of Arab solidarity tantamount to that marked by the establishment of the Arab League in 1945. It will be further cause for optimism when the US be-

gins to tackle the problems posed by the peace process as a full participant and an honest broker. The reasons for postponement are clear: this is an election year in the US, and it may wait before resuming an active role, until the State of the Union address on 20 January 1997. Yet the opportunity cost will be considerable. The peace process cannot afford to lose six months at this crucial juncture. We all will pay the price — including the United States.

If the Jewish lobby were to encourage the new Israeli government to consider that it is the right of Jews, both in Israel and elsewhere, to honour previous agreements, this could herald the start of yet another new day, filled with fresh hope. The credibility of states and communities depends on the extent to which they respect agreements with other parties and the terms of reference worked out during negotiations. The Madrid peace process, Oslo I and II, the Washington meetings and Cairo meeting set down terms of reference for a peace which could be accepted by all the negotiators. We may be in need of new ways of thinking, but this by no means implies new interpretations, imposed unilaterally.

Nor does it seem overly optimistic to envision a day when all parties, with the help of the US, will act on the premise that plans for future peace are the result of hard work and serious deliberation. It is time for all of us, including the US and, most of all, Israel, to cast aside self-serving definitions of security. Peace — real peace — will provide the strongest possible guarantees for in-

dividual, state, regional and international security.

At the risk of seeming idealist, it is also possible to aspire to a day, in the not-so-distant future, when the US and the regional parties will conduct "peace games", rather than planning war games to which millions of dollars and the most sophisticated military technology are devoted. These could lead, in turn, to regional public debates grappling with the problems of peace, and could pave the way for the creation of a culture of security and peace.

The precise way in which President Mubarak addressed the international phenomenon of terrorism was further cause for confidence that his initiative will provide a catalyst for the establishment of an international committee to study the causes and systems of international terrorism and present its analysis and recommendations to a world summit. This could lead to the formulation of new laws and programmes for the effective confrontation and, eventually, eradication of terrorism. This effort would allow humanity to determine, accurately and realistically, the nature of an international phenomenon, and would provide new channels for cooperation.

On the bilateral level of American-Egyptian relations, we may anticipate the Cairo Economic Summit in November, which is set to host large numbers of US investors. It is obvious that trade with the US could be stepped up to the benefit of all parties, but this will necessitate an appropriate investment climate in Egypt. This would be beneficial to the Egyptian economy; yet

we must not forget that it would be equally advantageous to the US, concerned with its competitiveness in the emerging international economic system.

The Egyptian-American Presidential Council, mentioned by President Mubarak, is crucial in this respect. Al Gore's initiative was effective in drawing attention to new investment potential in Egypt. But it should be remembered that the industrialised countries and groups have reached approximately the same levels of quality in production. Future competition will focus on penetrating new markets, and securing the lion's share of these. The international business community is well aware that Egypt is the door to the Arab, African and Islamic markets, targets made enticing to potential investors by their size and purchasing power.

During Mubarak's visit to the US, his audience asked the right questions about peace, security, terrorism and economic development. President Mubarak and his delegation gave honest, direct and accurate answers. It is time, however, to move from the question and answer phase to real action from both sides. If these steps are not taken, tomorrow will indeed dawn; but it will bring us more numerous and more trying challenges. Fewer opportunities, more difficulties than aspirations and, above all, a larger measure of uncertainty.

Major-General (ret.) **Ahmed Fakhr** is director of the National Centre for Middle East Studies.

## Shadows over Technology Valley

A fragmented industrial sector begs for reorganisation, writes **Mohamed Abdel-Shafel' Eissa**. As the investment-equipment and Technology Valley projects show, there is potential for necessary structural transformation, and a comprehensive, long-term vision

The economic development of any society is determined by a comprehensive long-range vision that structures priorities and the means of mobilising available resources. This becomes the ultimate strategy, from which emanate subsidiary strategies and policies.

The industrial sector in Egypt does not fully conform to this definition. It has a general policy (though not sufficiently integrated) and subsidiary policies. It does not have an ultimate strategy, however, as the following factors indicate.

First, industrial establishments are distributed among numerous public and private organisations. Each of the sectors subject to government control — among which industry, petroleum, electricity, housing and construction, food, supply and military production may be considered the most important — has its own particular strategy, whether implicitly or explicitly formulated.

Secondly, industrial production is divided into three separate areas of activity, unconnected by any common denominator in terms of goals or means. The first sphere includes the education, training, and scientific research and development carried out in universities, research centres and other organisations. The second involves industrial design and specifications. The third area of activity includes consulting and information supply agencies, the most important of which are the General Organisation for Industrialisation, the Ministers' Council Information Centre and the Central Authority for Public Mobilisation and Statistics.

The industrial sector's lack of an ultimate strategy is indicated, further, by the disintegration of its "objective function," to use the jargon of operational research. The "objective function" adopted for national security involves developing a relatively advanced military industry. In economic development, the objective function involves raising the level of industrialisation and increasing the participation of industry in seeking solutions to national economic problems. To this end, a bold attempt began five years ago to increase industrial activity and participation, through investment-equipment manufacturing. A third objective function applies to the direct supply of essential social needs such as clothing, food, shelter, medicine and transportation services. These are provided and supervised by the ministries of supply, transport and communications, housing, etc.

What is the relationship between industry and the diverse military, social and economic components of national security?

What shall be the operational mechanism of the industrial sector? Should it be based on a plan? Should the plan be obligatory or optional? If obligatory, how do we impose it on the private sector, and, if optional, what incentives should we offer the private sector to entice it to subscribe?

Egypt's marketing orientation is also unclear. Do we aim for an export-based industry, and, if so, what will these exports be? Should they be destined to markets in the Arab world, Africa, the industrialised West, or Eastern Europe? Or, rather, should production be geared to the requirements of the domestic market, following an import-substitution policy? If so, how should a pricing policy be elaborated, and should the pricing structure be predicated on a scientific analysis of the cost structure? Moreover, do we have the data base necessary for the calculation of actual costs?

What are our technological priorities? Should we seek to acquire the very latest in high-tech micro-electronics engineering, laser technology and genetic engineering? Or is the available, older technology sufficient? By "older", do we mean the technology of the 1940s, or that of the 1980s? How would we reconcile the eclectic assortment of old, modern and advanced technology?

How may the relationship among the various supervisory agencies that oversee industrial activity be regulated?

What conceptual framework should govern the relationship between industry and the various universities, research, training and design centres, and data processing and information centres? What will be the mechanisms which regulate and develop this set of relationships?

Finally, what is our conception of the industrial production structure, both in the short and the long term? Do we seek to restructure, and, if so, will this restructuring be flexible enough to permit for a greater preponderance of technological industries, particularly equipment and machinery manufacturing and information technology services and industries? How can we obtain the mechanisms to achieve this?

This final question is contingent upon the entire gamut of previous considerations. They are all perplexing, and all await answers. This, in itself, is certain proof of the lack of an ultimate strategy, which will impede prospects for developing Egypt's industrial structure in the long term.

The most important task before authorities responsible for formulating a comprehensive strategy for Egyptian industry is to restructure the industrial sector, re-commodating it to the requirements for growth in the world today. The primary objective is to promote Egypt from a low-to-middle income Third World country with a marginal manufacturing industry (the manufacturing industries account for 15-18 per cent of GNP, and the machinery, equipment and transportation industries, to the broadest terms, account for less than the value-added of the Egyptian manufacturing industry) to the ranks of those countries that are striving to achieve economic

growth through a radical increase in the potential of the manufacturing, capital goods and information industries.

Again, this process of radical structural transformation is hampered, above all, by the lack of any comprehensive higher strategy. It is possible to illustrate the nature of this constraint and its potential detrimental effects by reviewing current attempts at structural transformation and then subjecting them to a brief assessment. The most important attempts, in this regard, are the investment-equipment manufacturing project and the Technology Valley project.

The absence of an overall strategy has been detrimental to the investment-equipment manufacturing project in two ways. First, in terms of priorities, the project had as its primary objective to minimise the use of foreign currency so as to reduce the balance of payments deficit. It focuses, therefore, on producing the equipment necessary for the production of consumer goods, which account for the greatest portion of imported capital goods. These do not include transport machinery or electronic and non-electronic durable goods, which are end-use and consumer durable goods, not capital goods in the strictest sense. In other words, import-substitution is the guiding principle for the investment-equipment manufacturing project.

To use the structure of imports and their relative costs as the primary reference for decision-making in this domain is to disregard vital aspects of capital goods, the importance of which derives from another set of priorities. Here we refer to the necessity of relying on a higher strategy integrating the priorities for economic development, national security and essential needs.

To achieve integrated development and the commensurate structural transformation, we must give appropriate priority in the following manufactures: steel production machinery, particularly "special" steel, petrochemical production equipment, and machine tools.

National security considerations require that the following sectors of activity be considered foremost priorities: nuclear power stations; satellites and outer-space communications networks.

Finally, in order to supply essential needs we must expand the following industries: the production of agricultural tools and equipment; the manufacture of the machinery necessary for the production of medical equipment and pharmaceuticals.

Secondly, in terms of potential, it is significant that the structural transformation of Egyptian industry should find its most important mainstays, not within the civilian sector, but within the military production sector. It is sufficient to note that the Egyptian military production industries have always been in the forefront of the manufacture of tools, machinery and production equipment, in particular the manufacture of electric and non-electric engines; the manufacture and assembling of machine tools; the production of automotive parts; mechanised furnaces; irrigation and fumigation equipment; various metal products; micro-electronic equipment; the highest-quality and most diverse range of locally-produced durable goods.

How can we benefit from these considerable capacities without a comprehensive strategy for resource use and long-range objectives?

The absence of such long-range objectives and of a comprehensive strategy for mobilising resources is particularly evident in the Technology Valley project, which was designed to promote the establishment of high-technology industries in Egypt.

High-technology industries demand an integrated structure which operates at the national level and takes into both consideration interdependence within the Arab world and interaction with the industrialised world. For example, the electronics industry, the most prominent high-tech industry, demands a solid triangular structure. The foundation is the manufacture of essential electronic components, notably microchips, silicon, integrated circuits and micro-electronic equipment. Stemming from this foundation is the production of the electronic equipment used for industrial production, services and defence, on the one hand, and the manufacture of consumer electronic equipment for recreation, on the other. Without ensuring a solid foundation for the production of essential electronic components and integrating this, through inter-sectoral transaction and mutual linkage, with the other two areas of production, it will be impossible to elaborate a complex framework for the electronics industry within an integrated structure for Egyptian industry.

It is therefore essential that the Technology Valley project, with its core of micro-electronics industries, become a part of an integrated national industrial framework. Only then will it be able to achieve solid growth and avoid the pitfalls of technological dependency posed particularly by the giant trans-national companies that dominate world industry, particularly in the realm of semi-conductors.

The resources to develop an integrated electronics industry should be mobilised on a number of levels.

First are the research and development institutions, of which we have the Institute for Electronics Research (under the supervision of the National Research Centre), the Centre for Research and Development of Electronics Manufacturing (under that of the Ministry of Industry), and the university laboratories specialising in micro-chip and semi-conductor technology, particularly those at Cairo, Ain Shams and Alexandria Universities.

The manufacture of semi-conductors and integrated circuitry constitutes the second of these levels. This is the core of the micro-electronics industry, and Egypt remains at the research and experimenting stage.

The manufacture and programming of micro-electronic equipment, particularly mini- and micro-computers, is the third level. In this realm, Egypt has considerable potential, yet this is currently dispersed among the various electronics companies and other agencies and organisations.

Thus, both in terms of priorities and potential, the need for a higher strategy for the development of an advanced electronics industry is apparent. The same applies to the project for the manufacture of investment-equipment. These are only two examples; such a strategy is vital for the structural transformation of all Egyptian industry.

The writer is a professor at the Institute of National Planning.

## Soapbox

### Whose peace anyway?

Netanyahu's election victory led many people, both ordinary citizens and officials, to lament the defeat of Peres. Yet the patterns of peaceful settlement sought first by Labour and now by Likud share common features and structural links. We should do well to remember the words of Aha Eban, former Israeli foreign minister, who summed up the Camp David Accords as "an ideological victory to Labour, an electoral victory for Likud".

Independent Palestinian rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip remains central to both Labour and Likud strategies, the difference being that the Labour Party had already reached a formula for independent rule.

Israel has already reaped benefits from the peace process and it is unlikely that the Israeli electorate would willingly relinquish these. Enhanced economic growth over the past three years is not to be abandoned lightly. Was Netanyahu, by his hard line policies, to see Israel once more excluded from international markets the electorate is likely to be unforgiving.

Netanyahu realises that Arabs cannot afford any further concessions, and that any attempt to force them in this direction would undermine popular support for the peace process.

These are facts, facts that we must grasp with both hands. Israel's hard line should be met with an equally hard Arab line. We must work towards intensifying regional and international pressure on Israel as we stress the moral and legitimate nature of Palestinian and Arab demands. Israel must be made aware of the strength of our resolve. And we should also remember that, irrespective of the actual disequilibrium in the balance of power, peaceful settlement is no longer an exclusively Arab or Israeli concern. It is an international necessity.



This week's Soapbox speaker is editor-in-chief of Israeli Digest, published by the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies.

**Abdel-Azim Mohamed**



WHAT'S IN A SONG? What else but a festival. L-r: Mahmoud Reda, Samir Sahri and Gamal Abdel-Hamid at the Cairo International Festival of Song, which ended last Tuesday, when prizes worth up to \$5,000 were distributed by Minister of Tourism Mamdouh El-Beltagi

## Music

# A bird's gotta fly

David Blake  
trips on  
standard fare

Cairo Opera House, Open Air Theatre:  
Nervine Allouba in concert with Salah  
El-Din Abdullah (piano); 3 August

It's not much good going to the races if you don't know the form. And if you don't know the form it's no good talking opera.

Concerning Allouba, the form is always the same. After this concert, it is more consistent than ever. She is a lady who has been knocking at the door for some time. Her public — she has one of her own — has caught on at last, but have those in the marble halls of authority done so: that she is ready to take the jump into new material?

She has her personality, her musicality, dramatic instincts and that special thing you must have if you are going to leave the family circle — the opera — and go out into deeper waters. Surely the marble halls could give her something more interesting to do or she might get fed up and fly off to where the musical menu is more varied and exciting.

This concert of 3 August was almost a repeat of two others she has given in the same theatre. A few new composers, a few old ones, with the same old ghosts haunting the performance. Minelli and her mighty mother, Streisand, Marlene and Piaf. Some are truly haunting, though Allouba is never thrown or even put out by these presences. Through a long list of highly coloured tales of these Diva Pops she never tries to imitate their manner or tone. She never heard of Garland, so *Over the Rainbow* was sung clean as a whistle, no Garland vibrato or portamento. She just got on with her knitting and sang out clear and straight. The *Sound of Music* was despatched almost as clearly as Andrews did it.

Then Marlene! More complicated. She is a weighty ghost to dispatch. Gallows humour, black irony with the contempt spat in the face of authority. Allouba never changed her tone. The sense of criticism or the dark deadly message of the last of the loveliest of

flowers was missing. She sang over the top of the message and never once removed Marlene, who without any voice at all took the song out of the voices of all other singers and made it her own.

Gershwin's *The Man I Love* did not suit Allouba. She lacks both the colour of a blues voice and the projection for such songs. Her way is brisk to a point with hardly a trace of variation permitted. Straight on to the end then stop. This was not enough for my man. He needs the smoky, husky late night colours of Ellington and Hilday.

The song from *Jesus Christ* went well, but the melody is flaccid and obese and Allouba seemed to feel it. She needs line and accent.

The two songs by Kandell from *Cubaret* were among the best treatments of the night. The old chums came out to play. *Maybe this Time* was almost the best song of the evening. Survivor songs about old life, old chums, suit Allouba. One of the reasons people care for this singer is her courage. A challenge excites both she and her voice. But Nervine the ghost slayer of the second part of the concert must wait till after an appraisal of her qualities.

At the moment she seems to be moving around a lot, but is she getting anywhere? This concert showed her voice to be in splendid form — the result of hard work. The top of the voice has been extended and now shines brightly, slicing out into space in the best German manner. The so important middle is now melded to the rest of the voice, and lower tones are gaining colour and power. The voice now points to a particular repertoire — Richard Strauss. Allouba's style is her own — the final boon to any singer as Walter Legge, creator of EMI, would say. She has her way. It's Allouba —

like it or not, and it has personality. She never slides into tones or flaps her wings on pressure notes like most sopranos. Because the voice began small, she has learned all about the management of it and she enjoys herself. So where is the gripe with all this improvement? Not with Allouba herself. Maybe the marble halls could provide some lit-

more than hints of what she could do with Strauss's *Arabella*. No, say some people, let her stick to early Italian. No, says the listening ear of 1996. *Autumn Leaves* brought mostly the Prevett words. Kosma's music did not match up, but the singer found enough to catch the meaning.

My Boy was the Old Empire Music Hall with the poor kid out in front, fighting. The final group of songs were a bargain. All of them were well handled. Streisand, Minelli and Piaf. Evergreen was sung proudly, as was *You Don't Bring Me Flowers*. This singer is good at narrative because you can hear the words if you feel you must. In the Webber-Nunn song *Memories*, the singer will simply not break up the line and with no swoop as she begins to use her new-found low voice. There's not much to say about *La Vie en Rose* or the tiny soul with the huge voice who belted it out for a couple of generations. What sort of a voice did she have? Like Umm Kalthoum's, it was not a voice, it was a nature. And the Allouba voice is a voice of moods.

We finished with the Olympic song of the 1996 Games, *The Power of the Dream*. The final group of songs were about the Olympic games anymore. Maybe it would be better if the rest of the world let them go home again and begin from where the dream was created. This song had nothing much to do with anything at all, but it suited Allouba with its low tessitura. Beyond this was *New York, New York*. This was the end and the audience was happy. Another piece of Allouba's dream was completed, but only the beginning.

What is her future? An interesting question. She could be heading into Richard Strauss' operas and songs. She has a late starter's voice. There will be more work, more colours, deeper and heights. She begins to float over the Adriatic Sea as Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*, alone, poised, aloof and proudly faithful to the highest art of song, hopeful in spite of the skeptics beneath.

"Sing no mystic songster, sing."



Nervine Allouba

de bonuses.

She is not suited to Verdi yet — maybe she never will. He breaks not makes voices and Allouba needs other areas in which to shine. So these pop concerts help her to project her voice to the limit — a thing she will need later.

Part 2, beginning with that old, heavenly body, the Bach-Gounod *Ave Maria*. She did a very lovely job on removing the artificial robes and throwing instead some real ones — white roses, like the voice. Not a wobble to the top of a powerfully held climax. Very rewarding singing with

often had this sentence been drummed into my ears as a schoolgirl. I found myself, in all honesty, saying: 'If I wasn't Cairene, I would have striven to be Cairene'. And do you wonder why the countryside is becoming so depopulated?

Travelling into the provinces of Egypt is like travelling in time, backwards, not into space. It is a kind of schizophrenic experience. I have done it many times, and every time it proves equally disconcerting.

As our bold bus screeched to a halt in front of the Faqus Cultural Palace, we were greeted with a flurry of confused activity, the purpose of which was to divert our attention from the business in hand. We were whisked to a roadside cafe and offered dinner. We became very suspicious. Eventually, we were told that the director of the 'palace' had locked the theatre and gone away with the key to a nearby town to cultivate some personal business!

Eventually we watched the show in a small, neo-lit room, and it was painfully relevant about a painter trying to buy some pain-killers for his wife. By the end of the show, we all wanted pain-killers. The fact that another such trip happened within the same week has left me completely prostrate.

## Theatre

## A question of space

Nehad Selaiha discovers that lack of space is the major problem facing Egyptian theatre amateurs at the moment

The minibus parked opposite the Cultural Development Fund in the Opera grounds looked reassuringly healthy and really quite youthful. It promised a smooth trip with no hiccup, protruded buns of coughing, sudden strokes or engine attacks. The passengers were members of the Fund's committee for the promotion of amateur theatre in Egypt, established about six months ago. Predictably, the nine-strong committee had wilted in the heat of August and dwindled in number to two. Our destination was the small town of Faqus in the governorate of Zagazig — a mere two-hour drive from Cairo; there we would watch a performance by a small amateur group and judge whether it was worthy of funding. It was the committee's first venture into the provinces; previous applicants had always brought their projects to Cairo and we sampled them at the small floating theatre in Giza. The Faqus crowd were prepared to do the same, even though they could ill afford the travelling expenses. The fault lay with the committee, or, more precisely, with its head, Sami Khashaba.

Samir Gharieb, the head of the Fund, had optimistically thought that Khashaba, as head of the state theatre sector, would place some of the re-

sources of the state theatre, particularly performance space, at the disposal of his project. This happened for a while and the small floating theatre, which is normally out of action for most of the year, became a rehearsal and performance space for many amateur groups. It was there that the committee held its first public meeting with amateur and free theatre groups to acquaint them with the project and acquaint itself with their most urgent needs. In this meeting, and in the following months of dealing with various groups, it became absolutely clear that space was what those people desperately lacked. There are, of course, many cultural centres (affiliated to the Ministry of Youth and Sports) and the cultural 'homes' and 'palaces' of the Ministry of Culture; but these are overcrowded, ill-managed and run by phillistine bureaucrats who have a deeply ingrained suspicion of theatre. They still retain a medieval attitude towards theatre people, thinking them all either vagabonds, out-

laws or anarchists. In meeting after meeting, the committee grappled with the problem of space: it was not money that people asked for, but quite simply, space — room to breathe, perform and project all their question marks. This is why the floating theatre seemed such a god-send. From morning till night, groups shared it, not bothered by the exorbitant heat, the primitive toilets and the erratic, sloppy and exorbitantly priced catering facilities. Armed with their water flasks, sandwiches and sun-hats, they battled on and the committee, inspired by their example, stoically traced itself to sit through many a dull, boring, ham performance. It helped that the well-chosen committee had a core of critics prepared to lower their aesthetic standards of excellence to well below the poverty line, and who believed that theatre, in any form, was a kind of social and political protest.

Then suddenly, one morning, our head opted out — not physically or officially, but morally. An edict banning all theatre 'vagabonds' from the small floating theatre was issued by Sami Khashaba. He did not inform us beforehand. You, the reader, must be wondering now, and legitimately cursing: Why doesn't the committee rent or buy its own space? The answer is: I do not know. The committee has been asking and begging for this and for six months has been fobbed off with promises. But even if we rent or buy a rehearsal and performance space in Cairo, what about the provinces?

As our little, vigorous bus slid along the road to Faqus, bounding merrily across the dangerous stretches of the so-called highway, I remembered Gamal Hammad in his seminal book, *The Character of Egypt: A Study in the Genius of Place*, he had compared Cairo to an over-enlarged head sitting atop a puny, deformed body with under-developed limbs. I also remembered Mustafa Kamel, his proverbial statement: 'If I wasn't Egyptian, I would have wanted to be Egyptian.' How

## Listings

## EXHIBITIONS

Ahmed El-Husseini (paintings)  
El-Husseini, Opera House grounds,  
Giza. Tel 340 6861. Daily 10am-  
10pm.

Recent works exhibited under the collective title Faces of Life.

Ibrahim Abdel-Ghaffar  
Atelier du Caire, El-Radi Sidid  
Hall, 2 Karim El-Dawla St. Down-  
town. Tel 574 0730. Daily exc Fri.  
10am-1pm, 6pm-10pm

Alaa El-Shorfi (Sculptures) & Ali El-  
Sabbah (Sculptures)  
Atelier du Caire, El-Naghi Hall, 2  
Karim El-Dawla St. Downtown. Tel  
574 0730. Daily exc Fri. 10am-1pm,  
6pm-10pm

Group Show  
Museum of Modern Art, 8 Champs-  
Elysees St. Downtown. Tel 578 4494. Daily  
exc Fri. 10am-8pm

Show featuring the works of artist ex-  
hibiting at the gallery during the last  
six years.

Hellenic Library  
Foundation for Hellenic Culture, 6  
Alpha El-Toumanina St. Garden City.  
Tel 333 1871. Daily exc Sat & Sun.  
10am-5pm

A display of books about Greece in  
Greek, English, French and Arabic.

The Museum of Mr and Mrs Mo-  
hammad Mahmoud Khalil  
1 Kefau El-Akhdid St. Dokki. Tel  
346 6861. Daily exc Mon, 10am-6pm,  
6pm-9pm. Sat, 10am-6pm. Sun,  
10am-6pm. Tel 346 6861. Daily exc  
Mon, 10am-6pm, 6pm-9pm. Sat,  
10am-6pm. Sun, 10am-6pm.

Outstanding collection of Pharaonic  
and Ptolemaic treasures plus the ever  
popular, ever controversial mummies  
room.

Coptic Museum  
Mar Girgis, Old Cairo. Tel 362 8766.  
Daily exc Fri. 9am-4pm; Fri 9am-  
11am & 1pm-3pm.

Founded in 1910, the museum houses  
the largest collection of Coptic art and  
antiquities in the world.

Islamic Museum  
Port Said St. Ahmed Maher St. Bab  
El-Khalq. Tel 390 9930/390 1520.  
Daily exc Fri. 9am-4pm; Fri 9am-  
11am & 1pm-3pm.

A vast collection of Islamic arts and  
crafts including mashrabiya, in-  
stallation, ceramics, textiles, woodwork  
and coins, drawn from Egypt's Fa-  
timid, Ayyubid and Mamluk periods  
and from other countries in the Islamic  
world.

Museum of Modern Egyptian Art  
Opera House grounds, Giza. Tel  
340 6861. Daily exc Mon, 10am-1pm  
& 3pm-6pm. Sat, 10am-1pm & 3pm-6pm.  
Sun, 10am-1pm & 3pm-6pm.

A permanent display of paintings and  
sculpture charting the modern art  
movement in Egypt from its earliest  
pioneers to latest practitioners.

Mohamed Nagui Me-  
morial  
Children's Pyramid, 9  
Mohamed Ali-Cheikh St.  
Giza. Tel 340 6861. Daily 10am-1pm,  
3pm-6pm.

Museum devoted to the  
paintings of Mohamed  
Nagui (1898-1956).

Mahmoud Mahbub  
Memorial  
Telok St. Giza. Daily  
exc Sat & Sun, 10am-  
1pm.

A permanent collection  
of works by the sculptor  
Mahmoud Mahbub (d.  
1954), whose granite  
monument to Sand  
Zaghloul stands near  
Qasr El-Nil Bridge.

Commercial cinema change  
their programmes every Monday. The in-  
formation provided is valid through to  
Sunday after which it is wise to check  
with the cinema.

Big Eyes, Small Screen 8 Au-  
gust, 9pm.

Kasab Khan's chronicle of 13  
years in the life of a light-house keeper  
and his family.

Mahmoud Alai Asad Centre for In-  
dian Culture, 27 Telok St. Giza.  
Tel 340 6861. Daily 10am-1pm, 3pm-6pm.  
Sat, 10am-1pm & 3pm-6pm. Sun,  
10am-1pm & 3pm-6pm.

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Big Eyes, Small Screen 8 Au-  
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Kasab Khan's chronicle of 13  
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El-Husseini, Opera House grounds,  
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Atelier du Caire, El-Radi Sidid  
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Alaa El-Shorfi (Sculptures) & Ali El-  
Sabbah (Sculptures)  
Atelier du Caire, El-Naghi Hall, 2  
Karim El-Dawla St. Downtown. Tel  
574 0730. Daily exc Fri. 10am-1pm,  
6pm-10pm

Group Show  
Museum of Modern Art, 8 Champs-  
Elysees St. Downtown. Tel 578 4494. Daily  
exc Fri. 10am-8pm

Show featuring the works of artist ex-  
hibiting at the gallery during the last  
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The Museum of Mr and Mrs Mo-  
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and coins, drawn from Egypt's Fa-  
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world.

Museum of Modern Egyptian Art  
Opera House grounds, Giza. Tel  
340 6861. Daily exc Mon, 10am-1pm  
& 3pm-6pm. Sat, 10am-1pm & 3pm-6pm.  
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movement in Egypt from its earliest  
pioneers to latest practitioners.

Mohamed Nagui Me-  
morial  
Children's Pyramid, 9  
Mohamed Ali-Cheikh St.  
Giza. Tel 340 6861. Daily 10am-1pm,  
3pm-6pm.

Museum devoted to the  
paintings of Mohamed  
Nagui (1898-1956).

Mahmoud Mahbub  
Memorial  
Telok St. Giza. Daily  
exc Sat & Sun, 10am-  
1pm.

A permanent collection  
of works by the sculptor  
Mahmoud Mahbub (d.  
1954), whose granite  
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Zaghloul stands near  
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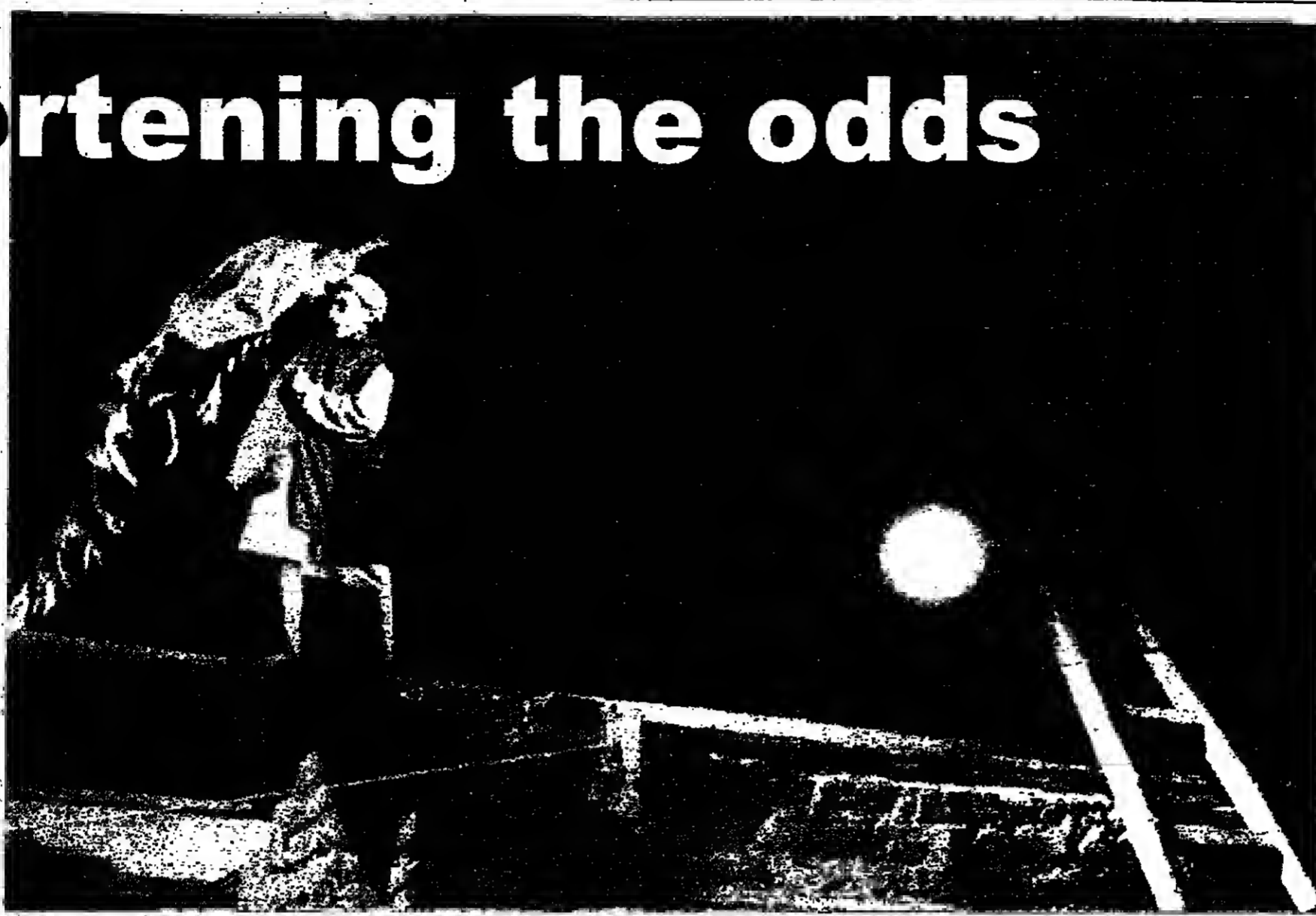
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The urge to create: The winners of the 1993 State Creativity Awards have just completed their final projects. *Al-Ahram Weekly* examines the results

# Shortening the odds

**Akher El-Nahar** (Twilight) is a short feature, soon to be screened. The film, directed by Ahmed Maher, is one of several projects to have emerged from the State Award for Creativity. Hani Mustafa spoke to the award-winner during the editing of his film.



Night time is the right time: Muawad Ismail flies his kite by the light of the moon in *Akher El-Nahar*, Ahmed Maher's final project

One day an advertisement appeared in the daily *Al-Ahram* announcing a Ministry of Culture competition for the State Awards for Creativity. The awards covered the plastic arts, theatre, film direction and art criticism. The winners were to be chosen by a jury, in whose hands rested the gift of scholarships, of up to three years, to be spent at the Egyptian Academy in Rome.

It was not the temptation of a free ticket to Rome that impelled film director Ahmed Maher to apply — "that was never what I had in mind", he says. Winner of the Golden Award at the 1992 Ismailia Festival for Documentary and Short Feature Films for *Rahil Ala Waraq* (Departure on Paper), Maher was, he says, lured by the opportunity the competition offered of becoming acquainted with new trends in European cinema.

Maher was lucky in that the year he applied the ministry had expanded the scope of the awards to include theatre and film directing for the first time. Initially, they had been reluctant about including these two areas, largely on the grounds of expense, for while the exhibiting of works completed by plastic artists during their scholarship period was free, the production of the award winners' plays and films incurred considerable costs.

Perhaps it was the fact that the Ministry of Culture had embarked on a new project that accounts for the many hiccups Maher was to encounter during his scholarship. Initially, the young director was told that the film he was to direct would be filmed and produced in Italy. Accordingly he produced a script, in Italian, set in Rome. Next he was told that the film would be an Egyptian-Sicilian co-production, set in Sicily.

"Naturally", explains Maher, "I had to alter quite a few details in the script, in addition to linguistic and idiomatic changes necessitated by the Sicilian setting."

The final six months of Maher's three-year scholarship were spent in Egypt, adapting his script to an Egyptian setting, since he had been informed that this was, in the end, where the production would take place.

The director was faced with the choice of either a massive rewrite of the script, or else embarking on an entirely new script. He opted for the latter.

"At that point, I remembered a script I had written before my departure and started revising and adapting it," he says. Regarding his old script after his Italian sojourn, Maher was struck by the extent to which his ideas about cinema had changed. Living in Rome had offered him

exposure not only to Italian cinema but also allowed him to travel to attend international film festivals — in Venice, Berlin and Cannes.

So, in what way did Maher's vision of cinema change after his Italian sojourn?

"Previously, though most scripts I wrote and directed aimed for a certain poetic resonance, they all, to one extent or another sought to address the audience directly," reflects Maher. "Although this trait had already started to recede — as evidenced in *Rahil Ala Waraq* — it was only when I started writing *Akher El-Nahar* that I abandoned such didacticism altogether."

In Italy, it seems, Maher ceased to view his work in cinema as the vehicle for a message but instead adopted a more formalist approach. It is most notably in the way Maher's latest film deals with the chronology of the events it depicts. The camera, in his scholarship project, rejects any attempts at linear narrative, preferring sharp shifts that fracture the unity of time in much the same way, Maher hopes, as happens to the theatre.

"Also I made sure while writing the scenario to make no mention of the background of the characters, so that the viewer experiences them as fellow pedestrians whose

acquaintance he makes briefly before going on his way," says the director.

Set in a popular quarter of Cairo in the 1920s, the film follows the tangled web of relationships between Zakaria (Sayed Abdel-Kerim) who lights the lampposts in those pre-electricity days, Nahed (Sawsan Badr) a prostitute, Karioka (Mohamed Kamel) the street performer who dances to the tunes of the trumpet played by his childhood companion (Muawad Ismail), and the patrol policeman Helmi (Othman Abdel-Moneim). The scenario simply presents seemingly separate lives located not so much by place as by the time at which events unravel.

The entire cost of the production, which was co-sponsored by the Production Sector, the Ministry of Culture's State Awards for Creativity (supervised by Atef Mostaf) and the National Centre for Cinema (supervised by Madkour Thabet), was just LE 75,000, a figure that might well encourage the Ministry of Culture to expand the scope of the State Creativity Awards. Such a low figure, however, was achieved largely through many contributors to the finished film waiving their fees. At the same time, what was originally planned as a 25 minute short eventually became a 45 minute film.

## Plain Talk

During the Atlanta Olympic Games I was confined to my home, convalescing from an operation. I was, therefore, restricted to only the most sedentary activities. I sat and read, and would sometimes turn on the television. Whenever I did the latter, what would I see? What else but the Olympic Games, beamed all the way from Atlanta in to my very own sitting room.

I could not but be struck, as I sat watching, by the intense drama of the events that unfolded before my eyes on the small screen. The experience was often akin to that engendered by watching an artistic event, a play, perhaps, or the ballet. The sports stadium became a theatre, a massive, open air theatre, with the athletes themselves the actors, protagonists in a great quest, a quest of endurance, of effort — a quest, in short, for perfection.

What struck me time and time again, as I watched the hundreds of competitors engaged in their various sports, was just how strictly choreographed were their movements, how intense their levels of concentration and endeavour. The sprinters, swimmers, divers and of course, the gymnasts, displayed a remarkable rhythm. The cameras focused on physicalists as they performed a variety of movements, running the gamut from legato to crescendo. Rather like some examples of the modern, experimental theatre, what we were in fact presented with was a struggle, articulated through the movements of the human body rather than through dialogue. It made for mesmerising viewing.

As the sprinters crouched on the blocks before a race the audience knew that what they were watching was a drama that would follow a fixed, a classic pattern. There would be a beginning, a middle and an end. The blocks were merely the start of a story that would reach its natural climax when somebody, when one of the actor-competitors, crossed the finishing line.

Sports activities are in some ways the great democratisers. They command far more support than most of the performing and creative arts, activities with which they have a great deal in common. The sportsman or woman is truly a modern hero, perhaps the hero of the late twentieth century. As I watched each sport I began to realise that individual activities all had their own rules and conventions. Each had its own plot, its own scenario, climax and moments of catharsis. There was something at once both triumphant and tragic in the events as they unfolded, as one realised that someone would win, at that winning implied that others would lose.

The television camera caught everything, the elation of victors, the barely concealed disappointments of those who were not. It was sometimes heart-breaking, sometimes breathtaking to watch. Always, though, it was fascinating.

There has been too little overlap between the worlds of sport and of the arts, and I now wonder why. For surely, just as in his later years De Gaulle should seek inspiration in the dressing rooms and stages of the ballet, today's artists could find an equal source of subject matter or the playing fields and in the great sporting arenas where humanity is engaged in its never ending quest to do better, to run quicker, jump higher and walk longer. And what better forum is there to witness these attempts than the modern Olympics, an institution that this year celebrates its centenary.

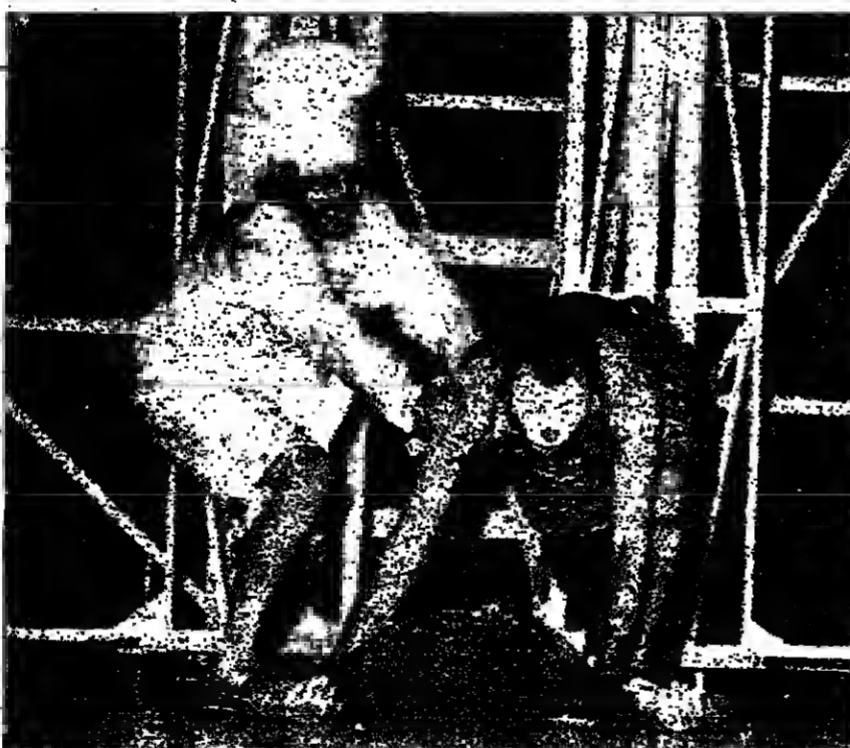
Certainly, in the past artists did show a degree of interest in sporting activities. The most obvious example, I suppose, are the ancient Greeks, whose statuary increasingly came to focus on idealised male forms. One need only think of all those athletes, discus throwers and the like, to acknowledge the truth of this statement. There appears to be a quite direct link between the Greek sculptors' focus on the straining muscles of the athlete and the cameras own concentration on such details in the televised Olympics.

The Greeks were not alone in their interest in sports. Certain modern artists, who ideologically could not be further removed from the kind of humanism promoted by Greek sculpture, also found inspiration in sporting events. Most significant among them are, perhaps, the Italian futurists, who saw in such spontaneous displays of emotion as are released in the stadium an energy that they sought to embody in their art.

Mursi Saad El-Din

## Facing new realities

If the world is a stage, then Ashraf Farouk occupies a very small corner. But his horizons are expanding, discovers Inji El-Kashaf, largely as a result of his winning a State Award for Creativity



ACCADEMIA D'ARTI  
ROMA  
Teatro  
GHIONE

EGYPT  
di  
WARDAL



Far left, *Youssef the Tiger*, which Ashraf Farouk eventually chose as his final project, as produced at Al-Hanager, and the programme of Egypt, in which Farouk took the lead role

Did Ashraf Farouk imagine, when he was a student at the Department of Civil Engineering, Cairo University, that he would spend several years in Italy studying theatre direction? Perhaps he did, for fate is strange, and can sometimes be predicted. Certainly, by the time he enrolled at the Theatre Institute, he had consciously decided to pursue a career in the theatre. And then he heard about a contest, run by the Ministry of Culture, in which the winners would receive a scholarship to study in Italy. It was in 1984 that the Ministry of Culture had hit on the idea of instituting the State Creativity Awards. The scheme was planned to encourage young and talented people in the arts by financing up to three years of study based at the Egyptian Academy in Rome. It was, however, only in 1993 that the required budget was found for the scheme and so, in that year, an advertisement was duly placed in *Al-Ahram* setting out the details of the scheme and inviting applications. Ashraf Farouk was one of those who applied.

"The ministry set up a panel that would judge the applicants, their decision to be based on previous works and qualifications. The panel adjudicating the theatre award included Sand Arush, Dr Ahmed Zaki, Lenin El-Ramli and Samiha Ayoub. I was surprised they chose me. I thought, mistakenly as it turned out, that the decision would be based on reputation and so I just presented myself with no expectations. I discovered, however, that things were very straightforward."

"At that time I was involved with a free theatre troupe. We had already presented *Sold El-Feran* (Cretching Mice), based on a play by Peter Kuzni, which had been performed at the Open House's Open Air Theatre, as well as at the Puppet Theatre and the YMCA. And during the Experimental Theatre Festival I had directed a play, *El-Halla Sef* (Ball of the Tether), adapted from Ross' *The Typewriter*. The committee also took into consideration work I had done whilst I was at the Theatre Institute."

"The State Creativity Award," as I understood it, was initially to comprise a scholarship for study in Italy for any period between six months and three years. Very soon, though, the organisers realised that the six-month period, six months, was really too short for anything to be accomplished. And so six months reports were sent back to Cairo with information about the awardee's activities and participation in the Italian cultural scene; the more activities the longer the stay. I stayed for two and a half

years, and on returning to Cairo was required to complete a project within six months.

The aim of the award is to expose young artists to Italian culture. Included in the scholarship was a three-week Italian language course, undertaken before leaving. But of course the three week course was barely adequate and on arriving in Italy we continued with language classes for another two months. Then we were left alone as far as language classes were concerned, though I continued until my last week in Italy. Language, of course, was especially important for me since I had to understand what the actors were saying. I studied on a daily basis from day one until the last minute.

"To practice the language more, I acted in a play in Italian after only five months. It was a tough experience. This was theatre, and if I said something wrong, the spectators would hear it wrong. On stage there is no second chance. The play was called *Egypt* and it was directed by an Egyptian colleague of ours, Adel Said. I played the part of a foreigner, a European, who visits the Egyptian monuments only to find the ancient Egyptians, played by Italian actors, coming out to drag him back to the past. The set, incidentally, was designed by Tarek El-Komi, another awardee."

"I was residing, along with the other awardees, at the Egyptian Academy in Rome. It included a cinema hall, a theatre, a library; it was actually well-equipped. "Soon I began to work as an assistant to Sergio Ammirata, director of the Teatro Amphitruone. He is one of Italy's leading directors of comedy and at the time I was very keen to gain experience with the Italian comedy. Ammirata was very knowledgeable about the *commedia dell'arte*, a style in which I was very interested. I was his first assistant at the Teatro Amphitruone."

"When I first started working with the troupe I felt I was receiving the Third Worlder treatment, but I didn't care because I was ready for it. Soon afterwards, however, I was being referred to as the maestro or Dr Farouk. We even featured in a TV interview where the director presented me as an Egyptian director whose talent and experience had benefited the troupe, and not as his assistant. My experience with Ammirata was tremendously beneficial, and he was most flattering, always treating critics and journalists to a long monologue, sometimes faintly embarrassing, about my talent."

"Last June I directed the play *Emperor Jones*. I relied mainly on modern music and mime. The obstacle, as al-

ways, was money; but I managed nevertheless. I put up advertisements in acting and dancing schools and at the Academy of Arts, with information about a four-month long theatre workshop that we had put together. I chose a few people, and it worked. I wanted professional actors for free because amateurs may be talented, but they take longer to train."

"The play was attended by the Minister of Culture. While we were working on the play, Abdallah Sand, the State Creativity awardee for opera directing, arrived. He's dark skinned, and so is Emperor Jones — who was in conflict with the white Europeans, played by myself. Nabil El-Halwagui, the stage design awardee had also arrived, and so I ended up working with an entire team almost without any cost. I tried to utilise all the talents around me and save money at the same time. The production was a psycho-drama reflecting the conflict between Western and Eastern cultures, and it was displayed through the costumes, the music and the decor. I tried to structure both the sense and psychological atmosphere through music."

"It was never in a financial position to travel to Europe, and it is unlikely that I will be able to return in the foreseeable future. The trip, therefore, was a great opportunity for me. I didn't waste a chance. I went to France twice and once to Finland, after being invited by various festivals. Looking back it all seems a little like a dream, a dream that is unlikely to recur."

"Upon returning my initial plan was to direct an opera as my project. The work I had chosen had been prepared for production in 1956, by Zaki Toleimat. Because of the war, though, the play never received a public performance. While still in Rome I faxed the production sector here with an outline of my plans. Once back in Cairo, though, in January 1996, they told me the plan was too expensive. You're too ambitious, was the general response. So I started to fish around for one-act plays. Lenin El-Ramli agreed to cooperate and we spent a month discussing and revising a script, only to get the same response. I was still being too ambitious."

"To cut a long story short, I was eventually told that I would work at Al-Hanager, and that within two months I would have produced a play. So I chose a play, *Youssef the Tiger*, written by Gunter Heiss and translated by Magdi Youssef. The only foreign element I included in the play was the names of the characters. I tried to stress the visual and aesthetic aspects in the production, leaving

the moral tone of the play to speak for itself.

"Because of budget limitations I opted for actors from the theatre institute and amateurs. I was determined to work something out with what was available."

The production tried hard to break the barrier between audience and actor. People go to the theatre either to laugh or cry, applaud and leave. But I tried to provoke the audience from the first minute. At the beginning of the play, the actors handed out fliers saying to the audience that they should expect to be confused. Immediately the audience was challenged, and began to think rather than just absorb."

"At one point in the play there appears to be a clash between the actors and the director. They forget the ending, and so canvas the audience about the ending they want to see. During rehearsals, I had told the actors to go along with whatever the audience suggested. I knew that such improvisation involved a big risk. Spectators are not, after all, used to getting on stage during the performance."

"The responses we had were very diverse. Some were shy, some were flustering, others confused. One man actually got very angry and wanted to hit the actors. But the important thing was that the ice was melted. I was very pleased with all the reactions; some people even came again with an ending in mind. There was an atmosphere that is reminiscent of Egyptian theatre. I would almost certainly not have done the play in this way if I had not spent those two and a half years in Italy."

The most striking difference for me between Italian and Egyptian productions is the attention to details. Here beauty is all too often absent from the stage. Design, costume, make up, set — they are all too often ignored. It was a situation I wanted to rectify in my production, and in doing so I was accused, often, of over-emphasising the visual aspects of the play at the expense of the text."

"The Italian scholarship was a wonderful experience, and on returning I was far from happy. But I will not remain unhappy for too long. As soon as I start working again things will improve. I used to have big dreams and expectations, but now I am more realistic."

"We need to have a system, to learn to solve the problems within a given situation. The budget is always the main issue and obstacle. We need an association to take care of the new generation. While I was rehearsing with the cast, something struck me. We were all over 30 and talented. So why does no one know we exist?"

## All that shimmer

Not too long ago, a woman's security was tied to the amount of gold she owned. Heavy bracelets, chains, necklaces were bought and hoarded for a rainy day. The women hung on to these ornaments as long as possible, but if a son or a daughter was in need of an unexpected sum, out came the gold which was usually sold at the *sagha* for a fraction of the price. Nowadays gold has become so expensive that a pair of earrings or a slim bracelet are the only items that can be found in the average woman's nest egg.

Dreaming however is not forbidden... dreaming of the day when there is enough money to buy a piece of gold instead of selling it, dreaming of a daughter lucky enough to find a husband who will be able to afford a rich engagement present, a couple of bracelets maybe... meanwhile there is no harm in looking at the brightly coloured shop-fronts to tell the neighbours about the number of people who were in the shops buying at crazy prices, may God send us such good fortune one day soon...



photo: Randa Sheath

Pot Pourri

## A-tissue

When tissue paper replaced handkerchiefs, I considered that humanity had achieved a major leap towards civilisation. I regard few things more uncouth than a rumpled, unhygienic piece of suspicious fabric extracted from pockets, always in a most surreptitious, inelegant way. Consequently, when tissues became popular, I cheered. In the last ten years, however, their popularity has grown so much that they have become a way of life. Wherever I turn, there is a conspicuously handy box of tissues. Moreover, I have recently come to the conclusion that the whole informal sector is somehow involved in the distribution of tissues in every conceivable package. We no longer have straightforward beggars. They have all become tissue peddlers. Observing their sales methods has become one of my favourite occupations while driving downtown or riding the metro. One day, I became absorbed in the behaviour of a nimble specimen of tissue vendor, a little boy who would board the metro, a bunch of pocket-sized packets concealed beneath his shirt, then walk up and down the aisles between stations, briskly selling his tissues and hoarding the money in a plastic bag tied around his waist. At stops, he would slip into a seat, looking like a normal passenger in case a policeman, on the look-out for illegal transactions, was in attendance. As soon as the train left the station, he would leap up again and proceed to hassle the passengers.

On one occasion another boy boarded the ladies' carriage, intending to practice the same trade. He was better organised, his tissues hidden in a dark plastic bag, which allowed for larger quantities. He was older and his technique was less aggressive. He looked more groomed and smiled a lot. At once many young school girls bought several packets of tissues. Within minutes, however, he had been spotted by the regular vendor, who wondered if they were present, but they did not speak, watching each other in a way that did not indicate that they were engaged in a joint venture. I was curious to see the reaction of the first boy to this encroachment on his monopoly. After all, it had been his turf. I did not have long to wait. As the train pulled into the station, the little vendor stepped off innocently enough, yet returned seconds later with a policeman in tow. The intruder was hauled out of the wagon by the scruff of his neck, as the "legitimate" vendor self-righteously informed the passengers that it was forbidden to sell anything on the metro. The next day he was back again, his pockets bulging with contraband wares.

There is also an old man who sells boxes of tissues not far from the US Embassy. Something is wrong with his throat. He mouths words soundlessly — words of thanks, I always assumed, because every time we stop at that intersection, we give him something. He puts us gently on the shoulder and moves his lips. He always attempts to push one of his boxes through the window in exchange for the money proffered, but we always decline — although I often wondered if we were not offending him. When we refuse the box, there is an expression around his eyes that somehow belies helplessness and a sense of inadequacy. Yet for a long time, I could not tell what it was that I found disturbing in his attitude. On the days when I rode the metro into town, I always worried that he might not sell enough to buy himself a meal. The next time I'd stop at the traffic lights, I'd try to make up for the other days.

A week ago, however, I was actually in need of tissues. Well, I thought, that was my opportunity to buy them from the old man. I avoided his competitors at other spots along the way, and passed at the lights. He came running. I searched my pockets for change and found only three pounds. Now a box of tissues costs less than three pounds, but I figured I could combine charity with encouragement of the informal economy. I therefore indicated that I wanted one of the smallest boxes. The old man gave it to me and I was about to consider the transaction closed when I felt his bony fingers squeeze my shoulder. I realised that he was demanding more money; he wagged two bony fingers beneath my nose. "I don't have any more change," I explained, whereupon he swiftly retrieved the box from my dashboard and took to his heels. Slightly surprised and even mystified at such ungrateful behaviour, I bought a box of tissues from the next street vendor, the same little boy for a pound and a half. The next day I was back at the traffic lights. I quickly spotted the old man slightly ahead. Weaving his way nimbly through the oncoming traffic, he was heading towards a fancy Mercedes. I saw him push his largest box of tissues through the car window. I was unable to observe what was going on at the receiving end, but from the old man's jerky movements I looked strangely like a tug-of-war in reverse. The box kept being thrust out the window, yet he persisted in pushing it back in. Suddenly the box disappeared. Instead, a hand extended what looked like a few pounds which the old man pocketed with swift, whereupon he practically plunged into the car, but not fast enough to grab the box. The lights having turned green, the driver had taken a flying start, tyres screaming on the asphalt, almost lifting the old man off his feet. Recovering his balance, he raced after the car and, having almost reached it, made a few kicking motions, then expectorated profusely in its general direction. He turned around, muttering silent sobs, and I realised that what I had been unable to read in his eyes was a terrible, impotent anger. It dawned upon me that what I had considered alms had deprived him of the profit he made by selling the box, then repossessing it at the right moment. What I had mistaken for a blessing could well have been curses at my stibbornness.

Fayza Hassan

# Empowering development

Ahmed Badawi looks at one youth leadership development project which actually seems to have achieved more than originally planned

In March 1995, the Egyptian government submitted a proposal to the United Nations' Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) to sponsor a 20-month Youth Leadership Development project. According to the initial proposal, the project was designed "to build the institutional capacity of local NGOs to implement youth-serving projects that operationalise the recommendations of the UN International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)...[and] aims to meet the needs of youth for clear and practical information in reproductive health, and establish a system of communication and culturally-based, gender-sensitive guidance on sexual health." Implementation started in July 1995. Before the year was over, however, participating youth came to the conclusion that their needs were not exactly those assumed by the project designers.

The story began when, soon after the ICPD, held in Cairo in September 1994, the vice-president of the Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), an American NGO, visited Egypt and met with the president of the Egyptian Federation of Scouts and Girl Guides (EFGG). The meeting was held to discuss the possibility of cooperation in a project proposed by CEDPA and targeting Egyptian youth.

In May 1995, another visit was made and this time the vice-president of CEDPA met with about 15 Egyptian teens and young adults from EFGG and the Youth Association for Population and Development (YAPD), which was formed in the wake of the ICPD and is almost exclusively made up of the Friends of the Forum, young people selected to assist delegates to the NGO forum held parallel to the ICPD. The meeting was held at the newly-opened CEDPA office in Cairo. Discussion revolved around Egyptian youth and their needs. "We didn't exactly know what was the purpose of the meeting," says Essam Adel, 26, one EFGG youth coordinator for the project. "We were just told that there was an important person from Washington who wished to speak with us."

One month later the project design was finalised and duly shared with the two youth-serving NGOs in addition to the Institute for Training and Research in Family Planning (ITRFP), a veteran local NGO based in Alexandria and assigned the task of training the young people. A

formal agreement was signed and implementation started soon after. But what did the project aim to achieve? Besides institution-strengthening and capacity-building components, 64 youth leaders were to be trained to design "youth-serving projects". An additional 136 were to become master trainers. The latter group would then "sensitise 2,720 youth leaders aged 18 to 25 [from Minya, Beni Suef, Fayoum, Cairo and Alexandria] on population and reproductive health issues to enable them to take action to improve their personal reproductive health and relationships, and to enable them to educate other young adults about reproductive health and empowerment issues," according to the proposal document.

For this purpose, a steering committee made up of five young members of EFGG and another five from YAPD was created to manage the implementation process and oversee the design of a training manual. The topics covered focused on four key areas: reproductive health; sexuality and family life education; interpersonal communication; gender and empowerment.

The members of the steering committee received one week of training then started recruiting the first batch of trainees, drawn equally from the two youth organisations. The process of creating the manual started in August 1995. By December, the youth project managers, and the participants, became certain that something was wrong. They started articulating their views.

"According to plan, the first group of 50 youth were supposed to be trained for 13 days, then five days, then they would start going into the field as trainers for other youth," says Hisham El-Roubi, 26, a youth coordinator from YAPD. "What happened was that they were trained for 13 days, then five days, then another five days, then three days, then three more, then four days. Eventually we produced a manual, but it was very poor, not in terms of design but in terms of content. We felt that the message was not very relevant to our needs as young people."

CEDPA, to its credit, gave the youth the space they needed and showed respect for their views. Even though a manual had been produced and six months of the project's time span had elapsed, CEDPA, after consultation with

the UNFPA, put the project on hold and gave a green light to the new project coordinators to suggest a new formula and even change training content and methodology. An Egyptian project manager was hired and the steering committee was replaced by a coordinators' committee made up of three representatives from the three local NGOs plus the project manager. "We picked up the initial proposal document and studied it very carefully with the assistance of the project manager," says El-Roubi. "We discovered that even the original design itself was flawed: some objectives had no corresponding activities and some activities were impossible to achieve. So the first thing we did was create a new design."

Starting from January 1996 the participants negotiated the new project design with UNFPA through the CEDPA project manager. In April, UNFPA decided to dispatch a regional consultant from Jordan to help draft a final design. "The consultant's report agreed with more than 95 per cent of the youths' report," says Yula Wissa, the project manager. "The main difference was about hiring an international consultant to help in creating the manual and also to conduct the training. We didn't agree to this because there are enough Egyptian consultants of the highest calibre who could do the job. Finally we agreed that the international consultant would just assist in creating the new manual and the rest would be taken care of from here."

In May, a base-line study was carried out among 500 young people from the five governorates initially targeted. A questionnaire containing a list of topics, to be rated in terms of importance, was distributed. The results showed that the majority of respondents, almost 82 per cent, believed that acquiring basic life skills was most important. These skills ranged from self-assessment and awareness to career planning and even how to write a proper resume. Consequently, the content of the project changed dramatically. Sex education and reproductive health information became just two among a wide range of training topics. The fourth initial content area, gender and empowerment, was dropped altogether.

The training approach also changed. Initially, the emphasis was on supplying knowledge. The new design is based on theories of experiential learning. "Providing knowledge is not enough

to change behaviour," says Wissa, originally a human resource development expert. "In order to change people's behaviour you have to help them reflect on their own experience. Then they can make a decision, either to change or not."

This approach is clear in the process of creating the new manual. During the second half of July, 25 youngsters gathered in draft the manual and test it. Not all of these were fully aware of the negotiations that had taken place to alter the project. Some who had initial suspicions have actually become more confident after "experiencing" the new content. Ahmed Hosni, 22, a scout from Minya, recalls that when he first applied to join the project, the first questions he was asked in the interview were about the ICPD and his views on female circumcision. "Then, when I started attending the training to participate in creating the previous manual, I noticed that a strange emphasis was given to these topics. We all agreed then that if we found that something in it went against our ideas, we wouldn't let it pass. Now it's better. Things were added that are of more concern to youth, like presenting oneself and writing a C.V. The method also changed. We don't get speeches anymore. Previously we did."

Those who work in development know how difficult it is to overhaul a project once it has been initiated formally. Wissa was actually quick to point out that, in this regard, CEDPA showed a lot of courage. "Even the UNFPA people were happy. Organisations in situations like these think of a thousand arguments to justify the flaws in their designs. Very few acknowledge their mistakes and not so many of these go through the trouble of redesigning an on-going project, which involves a great deal of administrative and financial effort."

So does this mark the beginning of a trend? Wissa hopes so. She explains that in development, blueprints don't work — especially in areas such as those covered during the ICPD. "Development projects in general should be open to change throughout their duration, until the last day. Unexpected results crop up all the time and, if we give ourselves a chance to learn from these, we can maximise the gains from development. If, on the other hand, we continue to stick to every preconceived, planned step which was funded, the gain from development will be limited."

Sufra Dayma

## Rice kofta in tomato sauce

**Ingredients:**  
1 1/2 kg minced beef  
One cup rice  
One medium sized onion (grated)  
Two tsp crushed garlic  
Two cups tomato juice  
Salt + pepper + cumin + allspice  
Oil + butter ghee (for frying)

**Method:**  
Wash and soak the rice for 15 minutes in hot water, strain and leave to dry, then grind into granules in an electric grinder. In a cooking pan, gently fry one teaspoonful of garlic in a smear of butter ghee and add tomato juice. Bring to boil, season with salt and pepper, lower heat, and leave to simmer. In the meantime, mix rice with meat, onion, the other teaspoonful of garlic and season with remaining spices. Blend well by hand and form into medium-sized slim fingers. Deep fry the kofta in the mixture of oil and butter ghee until slightly brown. Place on kitchen blotting paper and leave aside. Check the tomato sauce and add some water, bring it back to boil then add the fried kofta fingers. Lower the heat and leave to cook until the kofta is tender. Serve hot with white rice and a rich green salad.

Moushira Abdel-Malek

Restaurant review

## Come into the garden

Nigel Ryan seeks salve for a seven year itch

There are five bells tolling in Zamalek, though for whom exactly is not entirely clear. Perhaps for the four gilded figures, two female, in Greco-Roman drapery, two male, clad for some bacchanalia from which I was excluded, who spew water into the garden fountain. One thing is sure, though. The five bells certainly were not tolling for customers. The afternoon I sat in the garden to eat, it was otherwise empty.

Restaurant Five Bells, Zamalek, as it succinctly calls itself, is a long established operation. I remember, some seven years ago, when I first came to Cairo, visiting the place. I had not been back since, not that is, until this week, though I had always intended to return, remembering the garden as being rather charming. There are, after all, few places where you can eat outside in Cairo. So a garden, in the heart of Zamalek, has its appeal. It certainly, in summer, has rather more appeal than the restaurant interior, which is dark, terribly dark, and a little musty. Bits of wooden beams, large tapestries of nothing in particular, and dark brown carpet with matching napkins. Altogether a little overpowering. So escape into the light, into the garden, that happy Eden with roses and cacti.

The menu came and we ordered. They are long menus, punctuated by intriguing items such as lamb's balls. I remember, though my memory may well be defective, that the accent used to be more Italian. Now, though, the accent is all over the place.

As a compromise to lamb's balls we opted for Dawoud Pasha, together with cheese pane and a green salad, to be followed by "Five Bells Special Fish in Red Sauce" and "Five Bells Special Fish in White Sauce".

Service was relatively speedy, which, given

that we were the only people in the place was to be expected. The cheese pane, fried triangles of breaded *gibna roumi*, were passable, though *roumi* is hardly the most successful cheese with which to cook. Heated, it becomes both stodgy and stringy, a difficult feat for many cheeses. The Dawoud Pasha, balls of minced lamb, arrived in a heavy tomato sauce with green peppers and onions, while the salad consisted of the bisected heart of a lettuce with a little *gargir* and slices of tomato. Nothing inspiring, but pleasant enough.

Then came the two Five Bell Specials. Initially I had been curious about the red sauce, but when it arrived I realised at once that it was the same provenance that had doused the Dawoud Pasha. In addition to the onions and peppers though the kitchen had added calamansi and prawns.

The fish, thick fillets of sea bass, was a little watery and lacking in flavour, which with such a robust sauce is hardly an ideal combination. A denser textured fish would have been better, though to suggest that this might be a possibility elevates the Five Bells into another category of restaurant altogether. Fish here, as in so many Cairo restaurants, is just fish, for which read sea bass. The fish in white sauce also contained calamansi. Both were served with rice and circled with a ring of weedy looking parsley.

Together with two local beers and one soft drink the bill came to LE 110, which is neither good nor bad value, simply par for the course. Perhaps, when I feel another seven year itch, I might venture once more into the garden, with or without Maud.

Restaurant Five Bells, Ibrahim Mohamed St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8633/340 8980

Al-Ahram Weekly

## Crossword

By Samia Abdennour

### ACROSS

1. Bestowal (4)
5. The People (5)
10. Illuminant (4)
14. Arab prince (4)
15. In common (5)
16. Give one's word (4)
17. Sterilize (4)
18. Describing twangy speech (5)
19. Medicine; draught (4)
20. Personal pronoun (3)
21. Gid's name (5)
22. Secluded road (5)
23. Cupboard (6)
25. Male swan (3)
26. Hit with open hand (5)
28. Transitory; shed leaves periodically (9)
33. Musical note (2)
34. Crue; opening (3)
36. The milkwort (8)
37. Auricular organ (3)
39. Motion of agreement (3)
40. Event; ORIGIN (4)
41. Loozen up earth (3)
42. Initials of a high explosive (3)
43. Subterfuges (8)
46. The razor-bill (3)
48. Affirmative (2)
49. Government by the people (9)
51. Yellow fossil resin (5)
53. House pet (3)
54. Coffin vehicle (5)
56. Jeopardy (5)
59. Chilly (5)
60. Fry (3)
63. On the sheltered side (4)
64. Swellings (5)
65. Alleviate (4)
66. Harangue (4)
67. Angler's fishing basket (5)
68. WWII British gun (4)
69. Andrew's pet name (4)
70. The foolish guillemot (5)
71. Experiment (4)

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68. WWII British gun (4)
69. Andrew's pet name (4)
70. The foolish guillemot (5)
71. Experiment (4)

11. Confess (4)
12. Tableland (4)
13. Quarry (4)
21. Pertaining to science of plants (9)
22. Escort for VIP (9)
24. Heave (3)
25. Eyelashes (5)
26. Conviction (5)
27. Walk away from (5)
29. Its oil is very rich in vitamins A and D (3)
30. A grain (3)
31. Forearm bone, pl. (5)
32. Lustful man (5)
35. South African pass, narrower than a neck (5)

38. Aries (3)
40. Genetic code, abb. (3)
44. Brotherhood (7)
45. Tactician (7)
47. Kilometers, abb. (3)
50. Howler (6)
52. Towel (4)
55. Church pathway (5)
56. Pref. for "beside" (4)
57. Vivacity (4)
58. Lacerate (4)
59. Teacher (4)
62. Utilities (4)
63. Stopped (4)
64. Abb. of a mathematical term (3)
65. Superlative suffix (5)

Last week's solution

هكذا من الأصل

# Razing history

**Egypt's architectural heritage is eroding fast. The country's old palaces and villas are being razed to the ground at a furious pace, while, as Gihan Shahine finds out, the various authorities look on, washing their hands of the carnage**

"It broke my heart to see Al-Nozha Palace being knocked down," cried 80-year-old Amam Metwally, Metwally spent his whole life guarding Al-Nozha, which was turned into Al-Tawfiqiya school at the turn of the century. "The palace was fascinating; demolishing it is certainly a crime against history," he added.

Al-Nozha was leveled into a playground about two months ago. Its destruction erased an important part of modern history, but the details of its beauty are recorded in history books and travelers' logs. Built in 1858, during the reign of Khedive Said, the palace was considered an architectural masterpiece.

Among Cairo's 1,000 palaces utilised as schools, about 40 were leveled over the last five years, according to Farouq Goweida, prominent writer and literary critic. In a series of articles published in *Al-Ahram* and concluded last week, Goweida accused the government of "slaughtering Egypt's history". Author Samir Raafat echoed Goweida's alarm and their writing campaigns were instrumental in saving the Dutch Embassy in Cairo from demolition.

Officials at the Supreme Council for Antiquities, however, insist that only 24 schools were leveled out of a total of 75. Lists of already demolished palaces include Al-Hanifa Al-Saleh, Shubra Prep School, Geziret Badran, Ibn Rasheed, Ghanura Prep School, Road El-Farag Secondary School, and most recently Amin Sami Pasha and Taha Hussein schools, both located in Mounira.

Al-Nozha Palace is the latest, but probably not the last, on a long list of palaces which will be demolished. According to Goweida, the plan is likely to include the leveling of many other schools, declared unsafe by the Ministry of Education's Authority for Educational Buildings. These include Sayed Hall on Champollion Street and Al-Istiqal, which architects consider a rarity for its style and its unique metal tower.

Goweida also warns that the bulldozers of demolition will hit Saray Hab Al-Romman in Abbassiya, Baghouz Pasha Palace, Saray Nuber Pasha, Saray Prince Youssef Kamal in El-Matariya (now a neglected Desert Research Centre), Al-Boostani Palace in Bab El-Louq, the palace of Ismail Pasha Sidki's father in Shubra, the palace of Khedive Said Pasha's widow Inji hanim, and Saray Al-Khazendar.

It seems Goweida's fears are not unfounded. Despite the fact that Cairo Governor Omar Abdel-Akher has issued orders banning the leveling of any edifice that is older than 100 years and has unique architectural and historical values, bulldozers are still shoveling away the ruins of Shubra Prep School and Taha Hussein School. "We do not need any more laws or decrees," insists Raafat. "All we need is accountability; we have to know who is to blame and who will lose his job."

But this is where it becomes tricky; more than one authority is involved, including the Ministry of Education and its Authority for Educational Buildings, the Ministry of Culture and its Supreme Council for Antiquities, and the Cairo Governorate. All parties concerned claim they are not guilty and denounce the destruction of Egypt's modern heritage.

Minister of Education Hussein Kamel Bahaeddin said that he is not in a position to level a building without the consent of the Cairo Governorate. "As an Egyptian citizen," he asserted, "I cannot approve such a violation of Egyptian heritage."

Samir Youssef, head of the Authority for Educational Buildings, which is directly responsible for the demolition, affirmed that neither the board, established only four years ago, nor the Ministry of Culture keep any record of palaces beyond the names of the schools occupying them, included in a long list of 25,000 schools nationwide.

The demolition of these palaces were announced in advance and neither the Ministry of Culture nor the governorate have objected. The palaces were obviously unsafe," Youssef stated.

Officials at the Cairo Governorate, on the other hand, deny having issued any licence for the demolition of palaces. "None of them were registered as an antiquity or were in the records of the Ministry of Culture," said one spokesman for the governor.

The registration and documentation of old palaces and villas in general, not to mention those used as schools, is shockingly lax, according to Nehal Temraz, media relations officer at the American University in Cairo. Temraz, who completed her master's degree in 19th century domestic architecture, with Abbassiya as a case study, was a witness to the demolition.

"While working on my thesis, I hardly found any satisfactory information about the most significant palaces in Egypt at the Ministry of Culture and its Supreme Council for Antiquities," Temraz said. "I had to depend mainly on travellers' accounts and some history books. Even photos of great palaces were scarcely available — I had to go to the British War Museum in London to get a photo of the Nile Palace!"

The Supreme Council for Antiquities keeps no accurate statistics for the number of palaces and villas in Egypt, according to Mohamed Abdel-Latif, an official at the Council. "A round figure of 25, out of about 200 villas and palaces so far detected all over Cairo, are registered as antiquities," he admitted.

Abdel-Halim Noureddin, secretary-general of the Council, explained that it is extremely difficult to register every single palace in Egypt: "Registering them means encumbering the council with further financial burdens for restoration and maintenance. We certainly have no funds for that."

The authorities involved are locked into a vicious circle. If the Ministry of Education is to vacate the palaces and build new schools elsewhere, it needs compensation from the Ministry of Culture in order to purchase new land. But officials at the Ministry of Culture claim they do not have the funds for such an exchange or for registering the buildings as antiquities once they are vacated.

The extensive media campaign Goweida has launched seems to have prompted the Supreme Council for Antiquities to take some action. The council has formed a committee to compile a list of all 100-year-old and older palaces, assess them, and register them.

"Still the budget and division of authority are added obstacles," said Abdel-Latif. "It will definitely take a long time to make any headway." In the meantime, the destruction is still going on and the surviving palaces are decaying.

"This is a problem of Egypt's modern history being menaced," Raafat warned. "We are erasing an

important chapter of history."

Even if the palaces were defunct, this certainly does not mean they should be demolished, noted historian Maged Farag. "If people really comprehended Egyptian history, they would realise that destroying palaces is like destroying the Sphinx or the Pyramids, for the same silly reason of it being liable to collapse."

The bulk of old palaces and villas, as many historians show, date back to the period between the rule of Mohammed Ali in 1805 and the end of King Farouk's era and the inception of the 1952 Revolution.

Temraz writes in the introduction of her thesis that "the family of Mohammed Ali were the main importers and contributors to the dominance of the European style in Cairene domestic architecture. They were patrons whose only interest was copying Europe and the European palaces to give themselves a modern and fashionable image."

The late 19th century was a time of great prosperity when affluent people brought architects from all over Europe and competed to give their homes a unique facade. This prosperity was due to the opening of the Suez Canal, the increase in cotton exports which gave rise to the wealthy class of cotton dealers, and also to the privatisation of some royal lands and the consequent appearance of feudal land lords, according to Raafat.

In the aftermath of the 1952 Revolution, however, all edifices belonging to the royal family and their descendants were confiscated and turned into presidential residences, public institutions, hospitals, embassies and schools.

And that was the start of what Raafat calls "the architectural terrorism Egypt is witnessing now." The late President Gamal Abdel-Nasser concentrated on providing habitats for the poor rather than architectural beauty. With Sadat's open-door policy and the rise of a new class of nouveau-riche and entrepreneurs, a large number of old palaces and villas, like that of Um Kalthoum's, were destroyed and high-rise cement blocks erected in their place.

Now destruction seems to be moving at an even quicker pace. In the time between 1994 and 1996, after Raafat published a book about the history of the district Maadi, 49 of Maadi's 300 old villas and palaces were leveled, and replaced by high-rise cement blocks.

Similarly, Temraz had to accomplish her thesis quickly, "before the few remaining villas in Abbassiya were demolished," she recalled. Having decided on the topic of her thesis, Temraz was shocked to find most of the significant monuments of modern Egypt were not there. Famous palaces like that of Al-Nil, Al-Giza (built by Khedive Ismail), Al-Qaser Alali (previously owned by Khedive Ismail's mother) Al-Helwani, and Al-Abbassiya were all demolished a long time ago. Shubra Palace, built by Mohammed Ali in 1808 and described as the most beautiful palace ever built in Cairo and the first to have human and figural representations, was also leveled a long time ago. In its place, a pavilion was built to house the Faculty of Agriculture.

"Destruction is still moving very fast," Temraz said. Ironically, in the week-long period between the time Temraz's supervisor asked her to bring a detailed photo of an Art Deco frieze on the top of an old building in Abbassiya and the time she went there, the whole roof top was demolished.

"But I managed to take photos of some unique villas and palaces, some of which had been used as schools, right before leveling," says Temraz. "What hurt me most is that I was sure some of them were far from defunct; the iron beams and heavy thick rocks gave the demolition workers a hard time."

Negligence and abuse seem to have also taken their toll on a substantial number of the remaining palaces. "Just take a look at those palaces that are being used as schools and public institutions," said Raafat. "They are in such an extreme state of degeneration that it would be fairer to our history to demolish them."

The palaces which were turned into schools had to have annexes built on their grounds, marring their beauty, to accommodate the ever-increasing number of students. Palaces turned into public offices are mostly in need of maintenance which government officials claim the government cannot afford. Repair work, if any is done, mostly lacks taste and care.

"Many old villas were tastelessly painted in lacquer and many ornamental fences were replaced by ugly red-brick ones," Farag complains. "And when they wanted to restore the Supreme Institute for Education of Music, which occupied an old palace in Zamalek, they painted it a glaring pink!"

Since the government claims to have no funds for the preservation of modern history, many historians, writers and public officials have called for the establishment of a specialised trust whose duty would be to register all palaces and supervise their restoration and maintenance. Farag suggested that the government launch a donation campaign to raise funds for the restoration of old palaces, or sell some of them to individuals and use the money to turn the rest into museums.

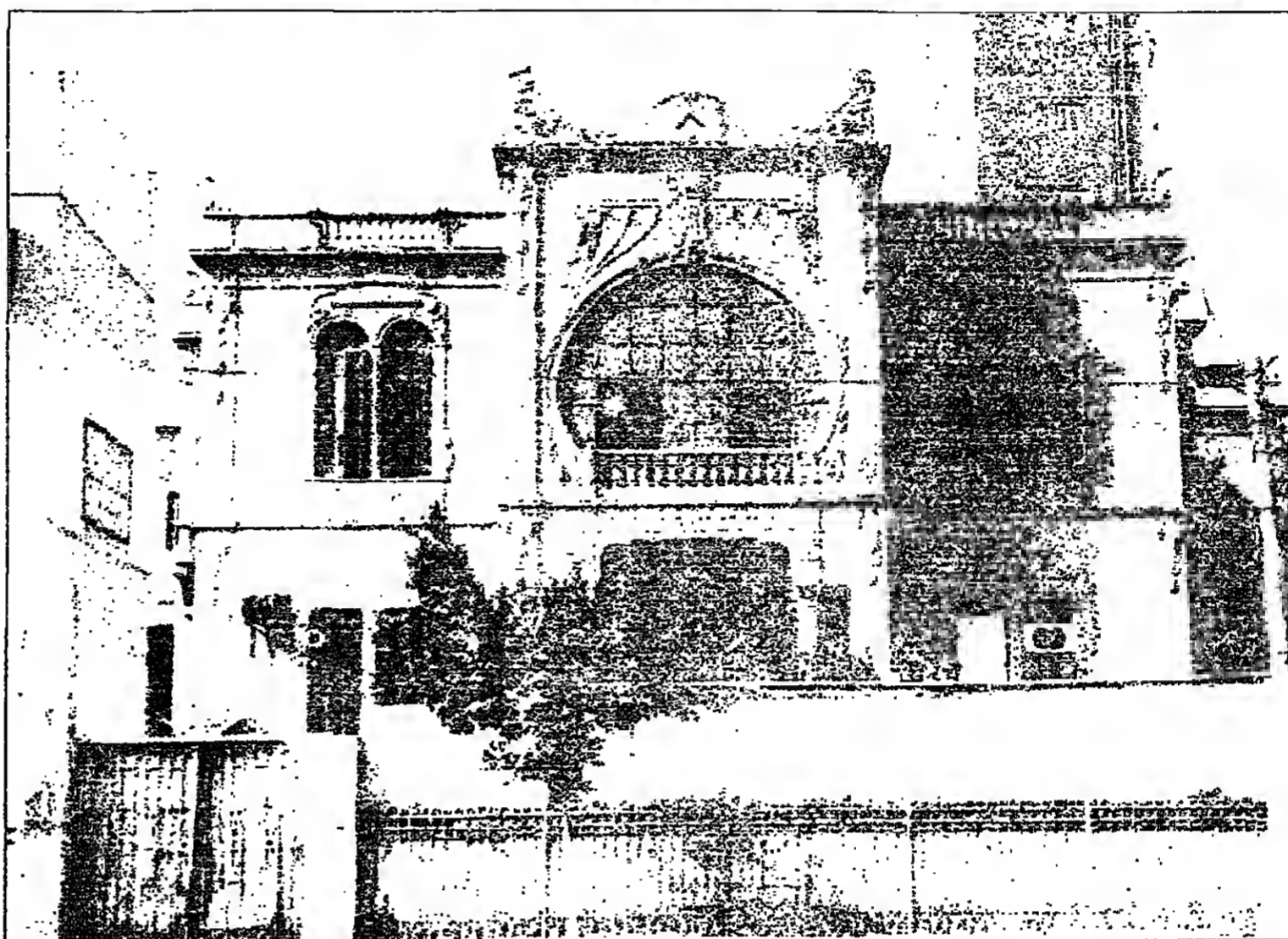
"Having one authority in charge of modern antiquities will certainly solve a big part of the problem, which is, the division of responsibility among all the parties concerned," said Dr Ahmed Nawar, head of the museum sector at the Ministry of Culture. "Some authorities are not always cooperative."

Nawar cites the example of an Al-Minya governor who turned down his offer to turn a technical school into a museum in return for some lands to build a new school on.

Sabri Nashed, the general manager of museums and exhibitions at the Ministry of Culture, agrees. He suggested that all palaces be evacuated, turned into museums, and put on a sight-seeing map for tourists. "All it takes is budget planning," Nashed pointed out. "Instead of building new museums, money could be allocated to building substitute schools for those occupying old palaces. The Ministry of Culture could then use old palaces as museums or cultural centres, which, in turn, would bring in a lot of profits."

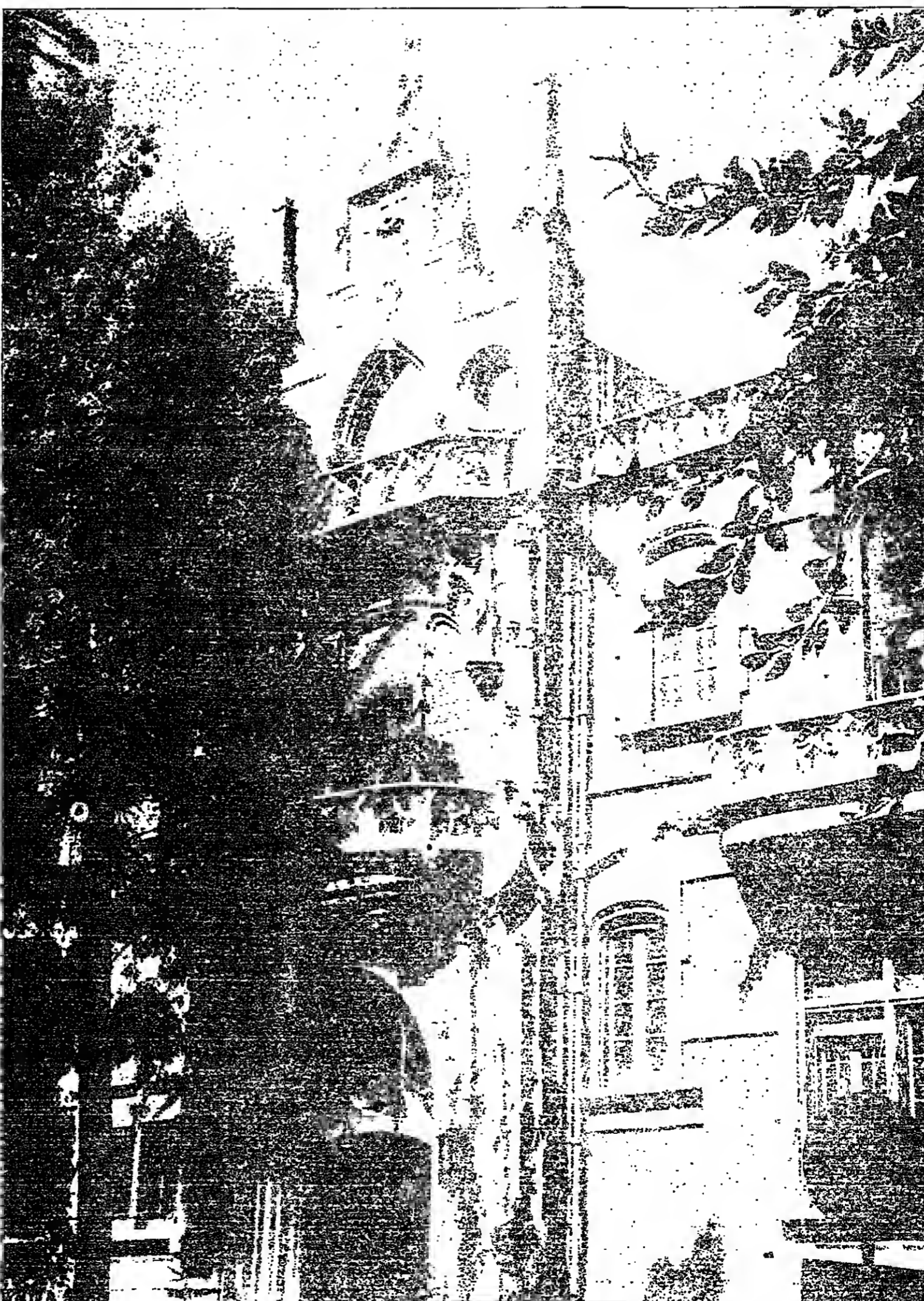
Private efforts are already being exerted to establish a Cairo heritage trust. The idea is the brainchild of both Raafat and Temraz, who felt the urge to take quick steps to save Egypt's modern heritage "before we wake up and find the remaining palaces all gone."

Their main target is to increase public awareness by means of recording the history of every villa and palace on a plaque stuck on its entrance. "This way people will sympathise with their heritage; they will be the true guardians of history," Raafat concludes.



**HISTORY ERASED:** An Art Nouveau-style villa in Cairo which was destroyed last year

photos: Nihal Temraz



**FOR SALE:** Once used as the residence of the Venezuelan ambassador, this Gothic-style villa on the corniche in Zamalek, built around 1907 by the Italian architect Garozzo, is on the market for \$16 million. Historians fear that its sale would mean its destruction

photo: Berry Iverson

# Fayoum: beyond the real



The perfect place for a pottery village? Or have tourism promoters already gone too far in converting everything natural and nice into an easily-packaged adventure?

**Tarek Atia wonders how long the oasis' natural adventure ride will last**

It's easy for city-dwellers to lose themselves in the picturesque, the quaint, the scenic — to try to encapsulate their rare forays into nature in neatly packaged memories, easily recallable at a later date. For centuries, marketers and hoteliers, even pouncing upon the pulse of society, have been quick to capitalise on our desires for ready-made, so to speak, nature experiences. Horse rides in the moonlight. Five-star jungle safaris.

Fayoum does it without trying. This is a story of two places: El-Nazla village, and Wadi Rayan, 30 minutes apart but on opposite ends of the quaint-as-money-making spectrum.

## El-Nazla goes downhill

Once upon a time there was a very picturesque mountain, actually more like a hill, in the midst of a valley of green. A river ran nearby and the trees were bursting with dates. Two brothers lived on that hill and worked the clay every day. They'd been making pots their whole lives, nearly 70 years. And you could see it in their faces: they wouldn't mind doing it for another 70 years. But this is not a fairy tale, and it's only quaint in the same way a barnyard might be quaint, until you've lived in one or had to clean it.

The brothers' names are Hashem and Salama Ali Abdel-Latif. Hashem is 67, two years older than Salama, but for all practical purposes they look like identical twins. The same longish, wide-checked face, the same stoop, except that older Hashem's eyes sparkle while Salama's look sad.

All the materials are local. The dirt is from the valley. The hayseeds come from the land. The two are mixed, then shaped and left in the sun to dry — 3 days in the summer, 5 in winter.

LE1.50 in materials makes LE5 worth of pottery. A man like Hashem, with six children to take care of, finds it increasingly hard to live on the LE3.50 he earns each day.

There is nothing at all quaint about that, Ha-

shem says, his green eyes suddenly looking very cloudy with age. His profession doesn't hold the same attraction to his sons as it did when he was a boy growing up in El-Nazla. The hill, which is so scenic that it has been featured in films as old as *Dooda El-Karawan*, is itself deteriorating. El-Nazla (which means "the descent") is literally slipping lower and lower into the valley.

Perhaps they've taken too much clay from the earth. It might be time for a change of scene...

## Clear skies over Wadi Rayan

Created over a decade ago by engineers and environmentalists by redirecting the flow of agricultural waste water towards the desert, Wadi Rayan is a half-man-made/half-natural combination of marsh and dune. It is a nature preserve which culminates in a waterfall about 5 metres high.

It's certainly nothing like Niagara, but unlike that mega-tourist destination, Wadi Rayan's waterfall is a fully interactive affair. First of all, to get there you have to follow a well-marked series of turns on a lone desert road, then proceed straight into the heart of the wadi, or "valley". Other than the occasionally very fierce sandstorm (like the one we experienced the first time we tried to go there, around sunset), the road is extremely safe, no longer restricted to 4x4s, and can be navigated by any type of vehicle.

Once you get past the dunes and close enough to see the actual waterfall, it becomes clear why so many ads and video clips have been filmed in Wadi Rayan over the past few years. Shall we, right here and now, re-label Fayoum Egypt's second Hollywood?

Wading along with a white water rapids-like stream, jeans rolled up past the knees but still getting soaked in the process, the nature experience, as an adventure ride, begins. Surrounded by a thick marsh teeming with chirping birds and ducks, you get to the top of the waterfall.

Once there, you might want to jump down

into the real rapids where the water crashes onto lower ground. Another popular option involves walking right underneath the rainbow of cascading falls, but in that case be prepared for a shower.

Afterwards, make sure to have a barbecue. Wadi Rayan is extremely popular on the weekends, when entire busloads of Cairenes descend on the place and proceed to have a jolly good time, dancing, singing and eating until the sun sets.

If you can take a day off from work, a quieter, more pleasant experience can be had during the week — beg your boss, it's worth it. Other than the two cafeterias (which are actually more like well-equipped kiosks with lots of chairs) and the recently-constructed public restrooms, Wadi Rayan has remained mercifully underdeveloped.

## Clay pots as gold-mine?

Imagine the same thing — hordes of tourists, gift shops, a cafeteria — in El-Nazla. If done properly, why not? The Nubians have done it. Flooded by the High Dam, they've adapted to their new home on the other side of the Nile in Aswan by making it a living museum, and making a living in the process.

The Nubians, whose language was unwritten for thousands of years, quickly learned basic German, Italian, etc., as well as intense marketing skills, to attract tourists. Does the self-exoticism bother them? Maybe not, now that there are washing machines and colour television sets in most houses as a direct result of it. Some find it distasteful, but has anyone asked the Nubians how they feel charging two pounds just to have "a traditional tea" with a tourist?



Self-exoticism may be the answer for El-Nazla's poor potters



Wadi Rayan: for now there's still room to play



photos: Sherif Shalaby

I asked Hashem whether he wouldn't mind the same sort of thing happening in El-Nazla. The place becoming more like an exotic arts and crafts bazaar run by someone entrepreneurial and well-connected like Hassan Ragab of the Raonic Village fame. Day trips, bloodless souvenir stand, cafe, the works. You get to the clay pots being made the same way they've been made for the past 10,000 years.

Hashem seemed enthusiastic, but not very optimistic. He was more worried about the day to day grind. Mulling it over I realised what a big change it would be. I remembered the reaction when we first arrived in El-Nazla. Since not many tourists know about the place, any visitor in a car is quite immediately thronged. Don't be intimidated. Get things going in the right direction, and buy a pot or two. I guarantee your plants will be eternally grateful.

To get to the clay-maker's village in El-Nazla from downtown Fayoum, take the winding road to Dushway, then ask for directions. If you straight to Wadi Rayan, take a right off the Fayoum Highway towards the Auberger Lac, then keep going. The wadi begins to show left after about 30 kilometres.

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- \* Please enclose a recent photograph.

## How to get there

### Buses

Super Jet, East Delta and West Delta buses operate throughout Egypt.

Super Jet  
Super Jet stations are located in Almaza (Helwan), Tahrir, Giza, Ramsis Street and Cairo Airport. Buses travel to Alexandria, Port Said, Hurghada and Sinai. Tel. 772-663.

Cairo-Alexandria  
Services almost every half hour from 5.30am to 10pm, from Tahrir, then Giza, Almaza and the airport. Tickets LE19 until 9pm; LE21 thereafter; from the airport LE24 until 5pm; LE30 thereafter. A VIP bus with phone access leaves Almaza at 7.15am. Tickets from Almaza LE28; from the airport LE32 each way.

Cairo-Marsa Matruh  
Services at 7am departure and 7pm return from Tahrir square. Tickets LE36.

Cairo-Sidi Abdel Rahman  
Services at 6.30am, 7am, 8am, 9am and 3.45pm. Tickets LE32.

Cairo-Port Said  
Services every half hour from 6am to 8am; then 9am, 10am, 3pm, and 4.30pm, from Almaza, then Ramsis Street. Tickets LE15 each way.

Alexandria-Port Said  
Service 6.45am, from Ramsis Square in Alexandria. Departs Port Said 3.30pm. Tickets LE22 each way.

Cairo-Hurghada  
Services 8am and 2pm, from Tahrir, then Giza, Almaza and the airport. Tickets LE19 until 5pm; LE45 thereafter, both each way.

Alexandria-Hurghada  
Service 8pm, from Ramsis Square, Alexandria. Departs Hurghada 2.30pm. Tickets LE60 each way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh  
Service 11pm, from Tahrir, then Almaza, Departs Sharm El-Sheikh 11pm. Tickets LE30 each way.

East Delta Bus Company  
Buses travel to North Sinai, South Sinai, Suez and Ismailia. Buses to Ismailia and Suez depart from

### Trains

Qutail (near Ramsis Square), Almaza and Tahrir Square (near Helwan). Buses to North and South Sinai depart from the Sinai bus station at Abbasiya Square. Tel. 483-4733.

Cairo-Ismailia  
Services every 45 minutes from 6.30am to 9pm, from Qutail, then Almaza and Tahrir Square. Tickets LE21; air-conditioned bus LE25, one way.

Cairo-El-Arish  
Services every hour from 7.30am to 9pm, from Qutail, then Almaza and Tahrir Square. Tickets LE21; air-conditioned bus LE25, one way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh  
Services every 45 min. from 7am to 6.30pm, from Abbasiya, then Almaza. Tickets LE27; morning LE27; evening LE40, one way.

West Delta Bus  
Stations at Tahrir and Almaza. Tel. 243-1846.

Cairo-Hurghada  
Services 9am, noon, 3pm, 10.45pm and 11pm. Tickets LE30 one way.

Cairo-Safage  
Services 8am and 2pm. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Qutail  
Service 10pm. Tickets LE38 one way.

Cairo-Luxor  
Service 9am. Tickets LE33 one way.

Cairo-Agoua  
Service 9am. Tickets LE50 one way.

Trains  
Trains run to Alexandria, Port Said, Luxor, and Sharm, from

Ramsis Station. Tel. 147 or 375-3353.

Cairo-Luxor-Aswan  
"French" deluxe trains with sleepers  
Services to Luxor and Aswan 7.40pm and 9pm (weekend Luxor 6.40 am and 8am, Aswan 6.40am and 10am). Tickets to Luxor LE294 for foreigners and LE129 for Egyptians, to Aswan LE300 for foreigners; LE141 for Egyptians.

"Spanish" deluxe trains without sleepers  
Services to Luxor and Aswan 6.45pm, 8.45pm and 9.45pm. Tickets to Luxor first class LE31; second class LE31. Tickets to Aswan first class LE63; second class LE37.

Cairo-Alexandria  
"Parisi" trains  
VIP train: Service 8am. Tickets first class LE32 with a meal; LE22 without a meal.

Standard trains: Services 9am, 11am, noon, 3pm and 7pm. Tickets first class LE23; second class LE17.

"French" trains  
Services hourly from 6am to 10.30pm. Tickets first class LE20; second class LE12.

Cairo-Port Said  
Services 6.20am and 8.45am. Tickets first class LE33; second class LE26.

EgyptAir  
There are between two and five domestic flights daily. Check: EgyptAir: daily 390-6999; Opera: 390-2444; or Hilton 759-9806.

Cairo-Agoua  
Tickets LE300 for Egyptians. LE391 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Luxor  
Tickets LE270 for Egyptians. LE780 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Hurghada  
Tickets LE238 for Egyptians. LE780 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh  
Tickets LE246 for Egyptians;

LE821 for foreigners, both round-trip.

### Sunny summer deals

#### Hotels

Here's a look at the special rates most hotels, especially resorts, are offering to Egyptians and foreign residents.

#### Hurghada

Helman Regina Hurghada: LE120 per person in a double room including breakfast, dinner buffets and taxes. Valid until the end of the summer season.

#### Sharm El-Sheikh

Sharm El-Sheikh Marriott: LE240 for a single or double room including buffet breakfast, service charge and taxes.

Sharm El-Sheikh Movenpick Hotel: LE200 for a single and LE250 for a double room in the front by the swimming pool. The hotel offers prices of LE160 for a single and LE200 for a double room in the back, or sports area. Prices include buffet breakfast, service charge and taxes.

#### Travel agencies

Travel agencies are offering various packages both inside and outside Egypt this summer.

Flamingo Tours: A trip to Nice is LE2,830 for 8 days, Nice and London is LE3,490 for 11 days. Spain and Portugal is LE4,230 for 11 days. Athens and Rhodes is LE3,200 for 10 days. Paris and London is LE4,950 for 15 days. Rome, Florence, Venice is LE4,750 for 10 days and Singapore, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Bangkok is LE3,335 for 19 days. Prices for a special cruise around the Mediterranean in deluxe boats start from \$1,382 for 8 days.

Karnak Tours is organising trips to Marsa Matruh for 4 days in three star hotels on a half board basis at prices starting from LE295. The company is also offering trips to Istanbul for 8 days at prices starting from LE1,450.

## EGYPT AIR

Telephone numbers of EGYPT AIR offices in governorates:

Abu Simbel Sales Office:	374836-327435
Alexandria Offices: Ram:	4833357-483776
Gleam:	5845461-5845434
Airport Office:	4218464-4227808-4202837-4201808
Aswan Office:	3150001/2/3/4
Airport Office:	480367-480568
Assiut Office:	323151-322711-324008-325402
Mansoura Office:	363978-363753
Hurghada Office:	443591/4
Airport Office:	442883-443597
Ismailia Office:	328937-321954-321951/2-328936
Luxor Office:	368580/1/2/3/4
Airport Office:	398567/8
Luxor Office Karnak:	382368
Marsa Matruh Office:	934398
Menoufia Office (Shein El Koni):	233382-233573-233572
New Valley Office:	068/901695
Port Said Office:	224129-222878-220971
Port Said Office Karnak:	238833-239970
Sharm El Sheikh Office:	606314-606409
Airport Office:	606408
Taba Office:	068/53010-530111
Direct:	5783628
Tanta Office:	311754/2/3/11760
Zakazik Office:	349829-349830/1

# Humiliating failure

In the aftermath of the upset of most of the Egyptian athletes in Atlanta, Eman Abdel-Moeti analyses the reasons

Olympic achievements mean more for Third World countries than they do for developed ones. For a country like Nigeria, an Olympic medal in football is like a place under the sun; almost a proof of existence. For Egypt, with its humble but worthwhile achievements and medals, it is a revival of the golden past. Sadly such hopes of revivification blew up in Atlanta like the bomb that exploded in Centennial Park.

Although the 1996 Egyptian delegation was slashed — for economic reasons — to 29 athletes including the 16 members of the handball team, and despite the strict criteria by which the athletes were chosen, Egypt again failed to triumph among the winning countries.

All the preceding preparations, efforts exerted, and money spent for the sake of a medal in Atlanta, were not enough to make the taste of failure less bitter. Many Egyptian fans feel it is high time for serious action to be taken and that Supreme Council for Youth and Sports (SCYS) head, Abdel-Moneim Emara's position is at stake.

Perhaps as a result of feeling the weight of public disapproval, Emara issued a decree with a nasty

bite. The decree terminates the contracts of all coaches who failed to live up to their pre-Atlanta promises. Gone are wrestling coach Yehia Kazarian, shooting coach Alexander Maroushkin, rowing coach Zoltan Miller, swimming coach Hassan Abdallah, boxing coach Mohamed Abdel-Aziz, judo coach Helmi Hussein, and Rania Elwani's swimming coach, American Tim Hatrich.

The decree further prohibits all players who did not make the mark from representing Egypt in any international competitions. Only those making their debut at the Atlanta Games were exempted and will have an opportunity in Sydney. As for those who achieved the results expected — among them the handball team, the Egyptian rower Ali Ibrahim, and the weight lifter Tharwat El-Bendary — the decree stated that they will continue to have the best financial and moral support from the SCYS to enable them to carry on in international sporting competitions.

The Supreme Council for Youth and Sports has further demanded a full report on the efficiency of all foreign coaches in all the federations along with a record of achievements.

These decisions, some say made to appease sports fans in Egypt, have sparked a wide ranging debate among sports experts, especially concerning the athletes banned from representing Egypt in international competitions. The logic of preventing their participation in all international competitions, where they might achieve better results, rather than limiting the ban to upcoming Olympics has been called into question.

As for the decision to terminate foreign coaches' contracts, there have long been rumblings of complaint over their failure, so far, to bring in results commensurate with their high salaries. On the other hand many federations feel it is unfair to deprive them of the international experts who may enhance their players' standards. Which poses the question: What if we face the same 'humiliating failure', as Emara put it, in Sydney? What will he do then, and what other measures will he take to save his face?

In 1992 Emara, as the new head of Supreme Council for Youth and Sports, stood before the People's Assembly promising no medals but at least a respectable presentation in Barcelona. Although his assurances did come true it did not pre-

vent then Prime Minister Atef Sidki from forming a high level committee chaired by the then minister of planning, Dr Kamal El-Ganzouri, to discuss ways of securing better results in the Atlanta Olympics.

Among the 97 athletes representing Egypt in Barcelona were some promising youths who, it was felt, could guarantee at least a medal or two in Atlanta. Judo's heavy weight Heba Rashid, and Egypt's swimming champions Rania Elwani and Tamer Zeinbom topped the list of promising athletes. They were among those chosen to receive grants from the International Olympic Solidarity Committee as well as special attention from the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports including suitable training places like the Maadi Olympic Centre, and competitions abroad such as world championships.

In 1994 Heba Rashid came in fifth at the Judo World Championships in Canada, while Tamer Zeinbom broke the African record in the 100 metres freestyle at the World Championships in Italy. As for swimmer Rania Elwani, she placed seventh in 50m freestyle, ninth in the 100m, and 14th in the

200m, at the World Championships in 1994. Those were the three athletes' best achievements, none of which should have given much hope for an Olympic medal.

These three athletes' failure in contrast to the success of the handball team, Ali Ibrahim the rower, and El-Bendary the weightlifter, places previous plans under question. The time has come to put emphasis on new ideas focusing on the making of champions. No one can deny that during Emara's first term, there were major breakthroughs in the construction of sporting facilities, venues, and training camps throughout the country. But, neither can one deny the main target is to enhance our sports and enable our athletes to reach top world levels.

To achieve this target, Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri held an important meeting with Emara and the heads of all sports departments prior to Atlanta to draw plans for sports in Egypt and discuss Sydney. Although it is the second such meeting of ministers to attempt in plan the future of Egyptian Olympic athletes, there is hope that the outcome in Sydney will be different.

## On the sidelines

### Put the blame on me:

THE BRITISH government, upset at the dismal performance of the country's team at the Olympic Games in Atlanta, has called on the national Olympic association to explain the delegation's failure. Minister for Sport Iain Spence telephoned Dick Palmer, head of the association, to set up a meeting following the end of the Games. In a not so sporting fashion Palmer rounded on the government for starving British sport of the funds necessary to train high-calibre sportsmen and women.

### Cheering the meeting:

GOVERNMENT affairs in the Philippines took a back seat at a recent cabinet meeting as President Fidel Ramos ordered television sets wheeled in. Cabinet members watched boxer Mansueto Velasco slug his way closer to the Philippines' first ever Olympic medal. "At the end of the cabinet meeting we all gave a standing ovation to the player," said Ramos, adding that a woman presidential palace liaison officer with the Senate provided a "very accurate and exciting account" of the match.

### Eyes on the prize:

MERLENE Ottey of Jamaica, silver medalist in the women's 200, made Olympic history by becoming the first runner to reach the final of the same event in five straight Olympic Games. Ottey has run for medals in the women's 200 in every Olympiad since the 1980 Moscow Games. She had won three bronze (1980, 1984 and 1992) before finally taking the silver in Atlanta. Ottey, for good measure, has a bronze and silver from the 100-metre races in 1984 and 1996 Olympics.

### Spirit Award:

STARS of the US Olympic team, Kerri Strug and Carl Lewis, have been honoured with the Spirit Award. The tiny gymnast and the track legend produced two of the most vivid images of the Summer Games — Strug injuring her ankle nailing the vault that clinched the team gold for the US women gymnasts and Lewis' soaring leap to win the long jump for a record fourth time. As they met to accept their awards, Strug said, "The first thing I wanted when I saw Carl Lewis today was a picture. I've seen him on TV and it's mesmerizing. It's wonderful to share this award with such a high-profile athlete." Lewis said he was inspired by Strug and her teammates.

### Palestinians commemorate Israeli athletes:

THE HEAD of the Palestinian Olympic team in Atlanta took part in a memorial service for the eleven Israeli athletes killed at the Munich Games 24 years ago. Muammar Baiso and the deputy head of the Palestinian Olympic committee, Rabbil Al-Turk, attended the ceremony. "All those who were present, especially the children of the Munich victims and the Israeli athletes, were really impressed by the Palestinians' attendance," said Israeli's counsel in Atlanta, Arieh Malkin.

### Johnson can do it faster:

WITH TRACK fans still amazed at Michael Johnson's 19.32 world record time in the 200 metres, he had a surprising revelation for them. He thinks the time could have been even better. Johnson said a misstep at the start of the race cost him time. "I believe I can run faster because of the fact that it wasn't a perfect race," he said.

### Naked ambition:

US SOCCER goalkeeper Briana Scurry kept her promise after the team won the Olympic gold medal — she ran naked through the streets of Athens, Ga. Hours after the Americans beat China 2-1 at the University of Georgia, Scurry kept her pledge.

"Yeah, I took my clothes off in a car and ran down the street and ran back, and I have proof. I videotaped it," she said. "I ran about 20-30 feet down the road. It was a little nerve racking."

### When winning is losing:

ALTHOUGH Ray Ewry has won 10 gold medals in an underdog Olympic career, he rarely gets mentioned alongside nine-time winners Carl Lewis and Paavo Nurmi as a great of track and field. That's because the US athlete won two of his golds in the 1906 Games which the International Olympic Committee does not consider an official Olympic Game. His Olympic titles came in standing jump events. Ewry was confined to bed as a child and at times he used a wheelchair. But, doctors advised him to exercise to develop his muscles. So Ewry took the advice to heart. He went to the 1906 Games in Paris, winning three gold medals in the long jump, high jump and triple jump.

### Sweet dreams

THE US DREAM Team struggled through the first half of their game against Yugoslavia 95-69 in the men's basketball final in front of a capacity 34,600 crowd. Yugoslavia, making their return to the Olympics following the lifting of UN sanctions, were at one stage only 51-50 behind. Lithuania beat Australia 80-74 in the bronze medal play-off.

### The Greatest:

FORMER world heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali, who threw his 1960 Rome Olympics gold medal into the Ohio River after suffering media attacks over his refusal to fight in the Vietnam War, was presented with a replacement at the men's basketball final. Ali, who lit the Olympic flame at this year's opening ceremony, suffers from Parkinson's Disease.

Edited by Inas Mazhar



Argentina's Alberto Morales (rear) and Nigeria's Sunday Oliseh go for the ball during the gold medal soccer match (photo: AFP)

# The struggle is over

While the rest of the continent watched, Nigeria defeated Argentina 3-2 with less than 90 seconds left on the clock to clinch the first African football gold in Olympic history, writes Eric Asomugha

Hailed as victory for the entire continent, Nigeria's 3-2 defeat of Argentina brought home Africa's first soccer gold medal in the 100 years of modern Olympic history. Jubilant fans in the Cairo suburb of El-Ba'ous Islamiya, home to the city's largest population of African students, celebrated into the wee hours of the morning.

"I've never seen anything like this before. Everyone is out, irrespective of nationality, to celebrate. The unimaginable is happening here tonight. This only happens with local Abil-Zamalek final matches," said Ali Mohamed, a Nigerian student.

Nigeria came from behind to beat Argentina before a sell-out 86,110 crowd in one of the finest soccer encounters of the Atlanta Olympic Games. Attacking from the start and enjoying greater ball possession, Nigeria exhibited all the qualities of a distinguished side determined to grab the gold at all costs. Argentina, with their coach Daniel Passarella issuing instructions from the bench, took a more careful approach to control Nigeria's aggressive attacks. The South American team scored the first goal less than two minutes into the game due to a lapse in Nigeria's defences. Argentinian Hernan Crespo, completely

unmarked, ran down the right corner and chipped a cross to Claudio Lopez, who found the net with a nice header inside the box.

Nigeria rebounded after 25 minutes of aggressive play with Celestine Babayaro converting Nwanku Kanu's cross into a header for the equaliser. The situation remained unchanged at half-time despite brilliant play from both sides with few chances allowed to pass. Argentina's goalkeeper, Pablo Cavallero, was forced to race off his goal line to block a kick from Mohi Obaraku who received a pass from Kanu.

Argentina took the lead once more in the fourth minute of the second half with a penalty kick, firmly netted by Crespo, after Nigeria's defender Taribo West fouled Aznaldo Ortega inside the box.

Nigeria piled on the pressure with the recently re-installed Dutch coach Jo Bonfrere's inspired substitutions changing the tempo of the game. With time running out, in the 35th minute, Daniel Amokachi levelled the game to 2-2 following a missed attempt to block from Wilson Oruma in the penalty area.

The moment of truth came in the 89th minute with 90 seconds re-

maining. Nigerian Emmanuel Amunike, substituting for Victor Ikpeba, out-footed Argentina's offside tactics in net the winning goal.

Argentina was the second Latin American country to fall victim at the hands of the Nigerian team. In the semifinals Nigeria came from 3-1 behind to beat world champions Brazil 4-3.

Nigeria's Olympic win comes just six months after the country was banned from the African Nations Cup after withdrawing from the event following a political dispute with South Africa.

Africa was first represented in the Olympics by Egypt at the 1920 Antwerp Games. Over all, Egypt has represented Africa 10 times, reaching the semifinals at the 1964 Tokyo Games and the quarterfinals of the 1984 Los Angeles Games. Of the eleven countries who have laced up their boots for the continent before Nigeria, only Ghana had succeeded in bringing home a medal, winning the bronze at the 1992 Barcelona Games.

Africa's coming of age in Olympic football, however had been signalled earlier with Zambia's first round 4-0 destruction of Italy at the Seoul '88 Games.

## The grass is greener

MAYBE they feel it's better in the US. Nobody knows, but defection has become the name of the game in Atlanta as five athletes and two coaches from different countries have opted not to return home with their delegation. It all began with the Egyptian wrestler, Mustafa Abdel-Hareth, who vanished into the hush shortly after losing his match. Hareth was spotted leaving the Olympic Village with his small sports bag as usual by members of the Egyptian delegation. But, by means of a simple subterfuge — leaving the bulk of his possessions behind — Hareth made good his escape. He hasn't been seen or heard from since.

Two days later, Marco Leva, the Cuban boxing coach on loan to the Mexican team, followed suit. Hardly had the team settled into the Olympic Village in Atlanta, than Leva was off to Miami, home to a large Cuban community. The Cuban coach has asked for political asylum away from the communist government of Fidel Castro.

The scene was repeated when Ahmed El-Awadi, Egypt's handball player decided to follow the lead of his countryman, Hareth. El-Awadi departed the Olympic Village even before the team had completed its matches. The reason behind his disappearance and his whereabouts remain a mystery.

The next to decline the hospitality of his native land was Iraqi weightlifter, Raed Ahmed. Not even the honour of being chosen to carry his country's flag at the Olympic opening ceremony could lift his spirits.

At a new conference, Ahmed said his flight was "a statement against the political oppression that the Iraqi people face, especially under (President) Saddam (Hussein)."

Ahmed, 29, said he would be immediately executed upon arrival in Iraq as a consequence of his actions. The athlete was granted permanent asylum status by the US Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS), which had formulated contingency plans to deal with defections at the Olympics. And a good thing too because more was in come.

Afghani boxer Jawid Aman Mukhammad and his coach of eight years, Ahmad Samin, surfaced in Buffalo, New York seeking asylum from Canadian authorities. Shortly after the opening ceremonies in Atlanta, where Mukhammad also carried his country's flag, Afghan officials branded the pair communists and refused to allow him to participate in the Games. Mukhammad denied the charge and was quoted in the *Buffalo News* as saying "In Afghanistan they kill communists." Canada granted the two asylum on Saturday night.

Compiled by: Abeer Anwar

# Beat the tests

The Atlanta Olympics may end without any drug expulsions, but it doesn't mean that the athletes were all clean

The growing phenomenon of the use of performance-enhancing drugs was a particular concern at the Atlanta Games. But athletes have been using steroids, stimulants, and all kinds of drugs to enhance their performances at competitions for many years.

Yet, no matter how sophisticated testing procedures become, and whatever high-tech machinery is used to detect them, scientists can always find a way to beat the tests.

Since drug testing began at the 1968 Games in Mexico City there has been a total of 51 positive drug results. It is almost certain these figures reflect only a small percentage of those who have managed to elude the testing mechanisms.

Last Sunday an Atlanta arbitration court ruled that there was insufficient scientific proof to disqualify two Russian athletes, swimmer Andrei Korneyev and Greco-Roman wrestler Zafar Guliyov, from the Olympic Games after they tested positive for the drug Broomant. Russian Olympic officials argued in court that Broomant was not a stimulant and was not officially on the banned-drug list. They maintained their athletes took the drug to strengthen their immune system to combat the heat and humidity of Atlanta. However, the court did not make its final decision until they heard the testimony of John M. Holbrook, a professor of pharmaceutical science at Mercer University in Atlanta. Holbrook concluded that, from the source scientific literature available, Broomant may well be a performance-enhancing stimulant, but he

could not rule out the possibility that it is used for the sole purpose of strengthening the immune system.

Based on this information, it is expected that three other athletes — two Russians and one Lithuanian — who also tested positive using the same drug, will also be reinstated. Atlanta will thus be declared another drug-free Games. But it will always be whispered that that is not exactly the case. If these five athletes managed to get away for lack of proof, others however managed to beat the tests outright.

From the start of the Summer Games, the Russians and the Chinese were on top of the list of athletes suspected of doping. After the Chinese drug scandal at the 1994 Asian Games where seven out of 11 swimmers tested positive for dihydrotestosterone, or DHT, a rumour spread that the doping of Chinese athletes was organised at the national level. Although the Chinese government denies the accusation, it is thought that they use traditional herbal medicines which are difficult to detect.

The Russians were also charged with having an organised doping programme, and the cases that tested positive for Broomant are held to be proof.

Although Broomant has yet to be placed on the banned-drug list, it is considered the new champion at the Olympics. Scientist be-



Gold medalist Ekaterina Serbryanskaya (photo: Reuters)

lieve that Broomant may act as a stimulant as well as a masking agent for official banned drugs. The success of the International Olympic Committee's medical commission in detecting Broomant was not enough to persuade the arbitration court to consider the new drug a banned stimulant.

With the proliferation of new drugs becoming available, probably by the time Broomant is officially banned another drug will appear to beat the tests.

Compiled by: Eman Abdel-Moeti



## Amr Diab: One-way mirror

Amr is fast, and his sky-rocket to fame is only going higher. Quick, he hasn't got a minute to spare

On a rooftop in Cairo, a young man washes his only pair of pants and waits for them to dry. He's got nowhere to go, and no money to get there. He dreams of the day when millions will salivate over his music, seek out any news of his every move — the day Amr Diab will have everything in the world he ever dreamed of: fans who know every word to every song, women who fall instantly in love with him, more money than he would ever want or need.

"Okay," a red-faced, moody Amr says, the minute he arrives at his dressing room before a recent concert. "I don't want anybody around. I need ten minutes on my own." Security personnel immediately cordon off the crowd. It's almost five in the morning, and thousands of fans have been waiting since before midnight for the heavy drums and Spanish guitars to begin, meaning Amr is about to sing "Habibi Ya Nour El-Ein" live, for the first time.

Most of the young men in the audience use him as a fashion reference — carbon copies of the slicked-back new hairstyle and trademark wide lapels that Amr sports on the cover of the new tape abound.

"He's always in a bad mood," says one of the many young men pushing for a glimpse into the room where Amr is psyching up for the show. "Don't you get it?" says one of the dozens of paparazzi on hand to cover the event. "It's a star thing."

Six years ago, when *Marysol* sold a million copies, Amr Diab knew he had it made. He would soon feed it to them bite by bite. The recipe called for one big hit per tape. A new look, a catch-phrase that instantly captures the moodiness of love, a slick video clip, a hyper-active laser-enhanced live show, and you're cooking.

Today he is perhaps the most famous man in the Arab world. His fans span all age groups and nationalities. It may be a completely different era, but some say his stardom even eclipses Abdel-Halim's.

Like it or not, his catchy words of greeting-card love, couched in easy melodies (pounding quick or syrupy sweet), are the driving force of an entire generation's

romantic psyche.

Amr doesn't mind singing different words to the same melodies on tape after tape. He doesn't mind using the same words in every song to describe his feelings. The Amr Diab album formula usually calls for eight tunes, no more, no less. In terms of theme, they can be divided into roughly two categories: 1) I love her, she loves me; 2) I'm trying to forget her, but can't.

Despite the idiotic pop sensibility and pure capitalism of it all, sometimes it's hard to resist, and without meaning to, you find yourself singing along with the earnest pretty boy who's either blissfully in love or being tragically dumped.

But the same songs coming out of every car and kiosk can begin to grate on the nerves after a while. And that's when you wonder whether the critics, who boldly claim that his voice is the vulgar dying croak of a great musical tradition, are right after all.

DID AMR KNOW the price he'd have to pay? The mob constantly closing in, the way they love you one minute, hate you the next. Newspapers have helped spread rumours that he has AIDS. His real home address is routinely announced on television. Last year, when his father died, a crowd gathered and began chanting his songs as he prayed at the grave.

Did he ever think it would really happen? Leaving Port Said with only the clothes on his back and less than twenty pounds to his name, singing at a club in Zamalek for less than his bus fare back home, did he ever think rags-to-riches stories actually come true? More often than not, he ended up sleeping next to the club's *hawab*, on a wooden bench in the kitchen. Maybe, as he washed his only pair of pants and waited for them to dry, Amr used to dream of making the film of his life, just like Abdel-Halim Hafez. The camera pans out as he sings another song from his roof-top shack to the cruel world below. Now that he's safe from the reality, it's an easy role for him to play. When he tells his story to eager reporters, he gives

it the typically romantic twists of all the best local-boy-makes-it-big-in-the-city yarns.

Just after the encore of "Habibi Ya Nour El-Ein", Amr disappears behind the stage through the doorway to the kitchen, a stampede of adoring fans following close behind. A minute later he's crammed into a room with a thousand people who will do anything to squeeze him, pinch him, whisper in his ear, pat him on the back, smell the sweat on his handkerchief. He probably wouldn't mind ten minutes away from the madness, but it won't be happening any time soon. His blue Oxford is drenched in sweat. More and more people flood the room. The night is still young.

It's seven-thirty in the morning, but you'd think it was mid-afternoon. Every once in a while a baby is thrown over for Amr to hug for the cameras. He flashes his trademark smile *ad nauseam*, fully aware that the giggling girls who touch him for a brief moment will remember it all their lives. Perhaps it's that knowledge that helps him survive.

But it's also big business. Studios pay LE10,000 for the chance to convince as many people as they can to have their picture taken with Amr — at LE50 a pop. It's a risky game — who knows if the big star will be in the mood to mug with his enthralled public? Tonight he's pumped. The first live performance of the new single went well — the crowd was energised. He seems not to mind the mob that is now making it difficult for the photographers to capture anything more than a tangle of bodies and arms.

Next on the agenda is the interview with *Good Morning Egypt*, to be shot on location outside. It's not easy to move five feet without the risk of a mob scene. Deciding he's had enough of the picture session, Amr heads for the door. It's amazing he's lasted this long.

Suddenly he turns around and, in a rage, pushes the kid was a bit upset because his turn would have been next. "Why'd you grab me?" Amr Diab yells, losing his cool for a brief moment. The room goes silent.

The kid looks stunned.

"Why are you grabbing me? I don't want anyone grabbing me!" the star yells, his face a confusing blend of apology and exasperation. The kid, crouched a little, is frozen in place. The autograph book in his hand seems to have grown heavier. Amr turns back and continues the treacherous journey to the balcony, about twenty metres away.

Still stunned, the boy is whisked through the security cordon onto the balcony by Amr's handlers, who are constantly hovering around their boss. Amr apologises to the boy and has a few pictures taken with him. Then he's leaning against the railings, the hotel gardens a gorgeous backdrop in the sky's new light, staring into the camera, never once dropping the smile as he seamlessly answers the standard questions. How does he feel about his critics? Is "Nour El-Ein" really about his daughter, Nour?

Then it's a few more pictures, a couple more autographs and a quick dash to the front gate of the hotel, where his black Mercedes is waiting. Eight o'clock in the morning, less than two hours until his plane leaves for Paris. Again, as over the past few months, there's not enough time to really talk. "There are about twenty things I still have to do," Amr says.

AMR IS NOTORIOUSLY allergic to journalists. He's an image control man, and most photo ops are just that: a chance for him to talk, act and be Amr Diab for a few minutes — crystallised, synthesised, easy-to-categorise: pristine star, rebellious glamour boy. Just like his music, just like his videos. He enjoys the unique blend of accessibility and inaccessibility.

The real Amr Diab? Probably no one knows. I travelled to Port Said in search of "the real Amr Diab". His is the ultimate Port Said *shabab* dream. The city operates something like high school; everybody wants to be friends with the kid with the shiniest car. Especially the girls. This is the attitude that helped shape Amr Diab.

In Port Said it's pointless to act grown-up. The image-mongering never goes away.

Amr is a Cairene now, far from that dreary port town where no one appreciated his art. Where money was king. Now that he's made it bigger than anyone ever imagined, he never goes back home to strut.

Amr lives on a planet all his own, says his brother, Emad. Occasionally, he'll come down to ask about his mother. It's funny, in a way, his pictures are plastered on every wall, they hear his voice wherever they go. But he belongs to everyone now — very little of their son is left for them.

Emad Diab compares his brother to Abdel-Halim Hafez. "Both had stronger competition from better voices amongst the singers of their generation. In Amr's case it's Ali El-Haggar and others, in Abdel-Halim's there was Mohamed Fawzi. But both Amr and Abdel-Halim were smarter than the rest. They had the sense to give the audience what they want."

The critics, however, are still waiting for a latter-day Abdel (either Halim or Wabab; beggars can't be choosers). Who will the next big voice be? Maybe, mostly drowned out by the synthesisers, Amr is already it. The endless love songs, romantic image and lots of screen exposure can't be ignored. If Amr ever tried for anything more serious or meaningful, his fans might drop him. Amr knows that well — he gives them as much as they can take.

Whether the audience is wearing Guy Laroche or *galabiyas*, Amr makes them dance — he inspires hip-swaying, head-shaking and mass shrieking. Everybody knows every word to every song — even the new ones like "Tiftikrini". Even the well-dressed Saudi who hasn't moved a muscle or cracked a smile since the concert began says he's just as much a fan of Amr as the kids dancing on tables all around him. "Amr is for everyone. The big, the small, the crazy, the calm — we're all happy."

The crowd is filled with the type of girl who looks great from far away and even better up close. Just like all the models in Amr's videos. Just like his first wife, ac-

tress Sherine Reda. Everyone says Amr only married her because she was the prettiest girl in town (Today Amr is remarried). Their daughter Nour is six. "No," he says after the concert, in response to *Good Morning Egypt's* question, "My daughter's name is Nour but that's a chance thing. The song wasn't meant to be about her."

The smug smile, the easy brush-offs, make it clear that Amr doesn't like questions about his private life. The trouble is, journalists want to know everything, so they can feed the hungry fans. Over the years the exposure has turned Amr's life upside down. Every time he sings a love song people interpret it as a reflection of how he's feeling about Sherine. With "Tiftikrini" (Whether you remember or forget me, there's nothing left in you I want), it seems he's over her for good. But you never know, with Amr Diab — he regularly blames the mother he rarely visits for being so perfect no woman could ever replace her in his heart.

The first time I talked to Emad, he bluntly told me that his brother did not want journalists to see him "in a natural state" — what if he'd had a bad day, or was really tired and moody? He didn't want people to have that impression of him. In song, Amr can be brutally honest about being jilted — but that, as opposed to being unloved or hurt, is still part of his overall image as the hapless, hopeless romantic. It looks good in a way Amr thinks the complete picture of his life never would.

So how does one get a little closer to the truth behind the myth, something a little deeper than the man in the mirror, so to speak? The answer is: one doesn't. The only important question is the one Amr asks the audience at six am:

"Is anyone here tired?" he says, wiping his brow.

He gets a resounding scream in response. "Good. Neither am I."

Profile by Tarek Atia

## Pack of Cards

by Madame Sosostris

Could it possibly be true? Will Egypt soon be joining the ranks of countries which shun smokers and their disgusting habit? I hope not. But the fact that the Cairo Sheraton has started to assign no-smoking areas in every restaurant and coffee shop in the hotel, and that this decision has been welcomed by all the staff and guests, could mean that slowly but surely, if more and more public places start to follow suit, Egypt will be well on its way to truly becoming an environmentally friendly country.

No jam and peanut butter sandwiches were served, and milk was most definitely NOT available at the bar; the baby of the Al-Ahram family may have been celebrating its third birthday, but Alaaeddin was given a very grown-up birthday party in the Opera House's Open Air Theatre last



night, hosted by Chairman of the Board Ibrahim Nafie and Editor-in-Chief Ezzat El-Saadani. And how fitting that the youngest Al-Ahram publication is a children's magazine — one which, I hasten to add, is rated by many as one of their favourite reads. I for one get my copy, discreetly folded into the daily *Al-Ahram*, delivered every Thursday.

When *Al-Ahram's* foreign desk heard the news,



they knew that it was time to celebrate. So they wrote up a rather distinguished guest list, including prominent political columnist Salama A. Salama, managing editor of *Al-Ahram* Salaheddin Hafez, head of the central desk Issam Bakr, Deputy Editor-in-Chief of *Al-Ahram* Mohamed Basha, Assem El-Otrash and Mohamed Abdullah of the central desk, head of the international features pages, Samia El-Guindi and the *Weekly's* Editor-in-Chief



Hosny Guindy. The invitations were sent out and pretty soon, a celebratory lunch was being held in the twelfth floor restaurant to say goodbye to their life-long friend and *Al-Ahram* veteran Mohamed Elissa. Sajjal Dolarmah and Atiya Essawi of the foreign desk did a beautiful job of playing hosts and made sure that their colleagues didn't celebrate too much. They weren't happy that he was leaving, of course. What they were celebrating was his pro-

motion. No longer our head of the foreign desk, Mohamed is now our man in Frankfurt, bureau chief of *Al-Ahram's* office in Germany. And as happy as they all were for him — especially his wife, Nazira El-Affandi, managing editor of *Al-Ahram Al-Ahsoodi* — they were just as equally happy for their colleague and our good friend, Salwa Habib, formerly Mohamed's deputy and now his replacement. Veteran *Al-Ahramist* and possibly the sweetest woman you could ever meet, Salwa took the congratulations being showered on her with the usual modesty and charm for which she is so loved and admired.

Not content with being a good friend of mine and editor of the *Weekly's* South and International pages, Gamal Nkrumah decided to also become a father. Those who know him know that Gamal usually has ways of getting what he wants, and in no time at all he and his lovely wife, Ghada El-Hennawi, were the proud parents of the absolutely adorable three-week-old Karim Kwaku. Congratulations to them both.